

EVANGELISM AND FOLK ISLAM: A CASE STUDY IN SOUTH COAST OF KENYA

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject of

MISSIOLOGY-WITH SPECIALISATION IN MUSLIM EVANGELISM

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF T.D. MASHAU

SEPTEMBER 2017

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is greatfully dedicated to the Almighty God in heaven for whom its outcomes bring glory now and forever in the name of Jesus!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First of all, my gratitude goes to One and only true God for sustaining me throughout my theis writing journey. Praise to be to Him.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge Prof TD Mashau my supervisor for his great support and encouragement throughout the study. According to the researcher, while I take full accountability for the work, it could not be accomplished without his scholarly guidance. I greatly appreciate his critical input to my way of thinking, and style of writing, which has made this thesis a meaningful undertaking.

Thirdly, I would like to acknowldge pastor Bryan Wright of Kononia House of Prayer Church for his prayers and for working tirelessly in editing the thesis. I also thank Professor Thulani Zengele for the professional language editing of my work and Pholie Zengele for formatting.

Finally, I want to thank my children Esther Nyangwenso, Jabez Nyagwoka, and Obed Onkundi for being patient with me as I spent most of my time studying and writing without spending enough time with them as a Father! I indeed, appreciate your understanding and Your prayers for me. For my wife Veronicah Ikonge, I say thank you for being there for me at all times to encourage me in the writing journey. May God's blessings continue to be on you.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Islamic religion has become a challenge to Christianity due to its rapid growth around the world today. Christianity and Islam are both devising strategies on how to reach out to each other with their conflicting messages. Christian missiologists have come up with several approaches of doing Mission to the Muslims. However, because of the Islamic practices and beliefs that vary in different contexts or from place to place, some of the approaches are not effective in some areas. The nature of the cultural context has more often made it progressively difficult for the Christian churches and missionaries to do Mission among the Muslim countries, including those at South Coast of Kenya, the Digo folk Muslims.

The call for a suitable understanding of an evangelism approach among the Digo folk Muslims is an essential concept for an effective Mission to them. There is no doubt that in Digoland, there is still a great challenge in evangelising the Digo people. Even though currently there is a good number of un-indigenous churches in this area, the problem remains that the Digo Muslims have not effectively responded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ at large. It is also clear that the evangelism approaches that the Christian churches are using have not been effective.

This thesis analytically examines evangelism approaches to Mission among the Digo folk Muslims by seven selected Christian churches from different denominations in the South Coast of Kenya. The study investigates the effectiveness of the evangelism approaches, which these churches are using with the Digo folk Muslims in sharing the gospel. Mostly using data collected from oral interviews, the study finds that Mission involvement to Digo Muslims is slow and not as effective as evidenced by the small number of the Muslim background believers in the selected churches. The churches and the Muslim background believers face challenges that include fear due to threats from the Muslim community as they

perceive the Christians as adversaries who are stealing their members. Moreover, the few Muslims are, at times threatened with death. The churches also face challenges from the lack of effective training in Muslim evangelism in context including the financial constraints for Muslim Mission in the area.

The research concludes that significantly, there is a need for the selected churches to reexamine and reconsider their evangelism approaches to Digo folk Muslims with a view to improving their ways of engaging in sharing the gospel with them. Finally, the study formulates and proposes a practical biblical model for effective Mission to these Digo Muslims.

**Key Words:** Church, Evangelism approaches, Mission, the Digo Muslims, folk Islam, Christianity, Contextualisation, Biblical model, Inside movement, Crusades, Dialogue, Muslim background believers, and Polemic.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The researcher became interested in Muslim Evangelism<sup>1</sup> in 2001 when he was doing his master's degree in world Mission at the Adventist International Institute of Advance Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines. During the study, the researcher had an encounter with a student (pastor Rosa) who was a former Muslim in the theology of Mission class. This student was a pastor with the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in a Muslim dominated area and he was assigned to reach out to Muslims with the Gospel of Christ Jesus. He invited and encouraged the researcher to accompany him as he did his ministry to the Muslims within the school area. On several occasions, the researcher visited the Mosque with him. As a Mission student, the researcher started to learn in a new area of ministry on how to evangelise the Muslims.

During the visit to the Mosque, the researcher was motivated to see how sincere the Muslims were in their prayers and worshipping services. At the same time, the researcher was also astonished that they did not believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, for this was his first encounter with such a notion. However, the researcher's pastor friend was given an opportunity to share a Scripture from the book of Isaiah, and draw insights from it as it related to the daily life of God's people. The Muslims were attentive as he shared the Scriptures with them. The researcher became Pastor Rosa's student friend as he taught him how to reach out to the Muslims with the gospel. They did this ministry of Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> Alvin Reid (2009 :22) indicates that evangelism in the New Testament is transliterated into the English as evangel (noun) or evangelize (verb). The main part of the term evangelism contains the English word 'angel,' a messenger. So, to evangelize or evangelizing is to communicate good news of Christ Jesus to those who have not yet understood, heard or accept it.

evangelism together until the researcher completed his studies in 2002. As they ministered to the Muslims, they knew them as those who were interested in learning about Islam.

After the researcher completed his studies at AIIAS, he received a call in 2002 from the SDA church to go and serve as a pastor in Mombasa, Kenya. During his orientation as a pastor in Mombasa Island, he discovered that it was heavily dominated by the Islam. His passion for Muslim evangelism continued to inspire him, yet he knew that it would be a difficult challenge, after having already attempted it in the Philippines. The researcher found it helpful that the two churches he was assigned to serve had leaders, local church members who were in charge of Muslim evangelism<sup>2</sup>. He started working with the two local church leaders in developing strategies on how to be more effective in sharing the gospel with the Muslims on the Island of Mombasa. Mombasa is a town of manifold people, including Swahili people, the indigenous people<sup>3</sup>, as well as others from various parts of upcountry Kenya.

After serving as a pastor in Mombasa and Bamburi districts for a total of four years, the researcher was elected and asked to become the departmental director for the whole coast province, Northeastern Province and part of the Eastern Province of Kenya. In this capacity, he was in charge of evangelism, global Mission, personal ministries and Adventist Muslim Relations (AMR). He supervised the Mission efforts of the Kenya Coast field of the SDA Church in the region for four years. It was during this ministry where he learned that folk religion dominated the regions he served. The researcher observed how various Christian denominations worked hard to evangelise the Muslims in the region, which was heavily

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<sup>2</sup> A local church Muslim evangelism leader was known by the name Adventist Muslim relation (AMR) coordinator as given by the SDA church. His work is to coordinate and make sure that there is peace between the Christians and the Muslims within their area of reach. The coordinator also coordinates the Muslim evangelism programs with the local church as they come from the church's headquarters.

<sup>3</sup> The indigenous people of Mombasa are known to be the *Mijikenda* (literary, nine villages). And the upcountry people from other tribes of Kenya, who have come to Mombasa for various reasons, mostly they have come there to work or to find for jobs, Mombasa being the second capital city of Kenya.



dominated by folk Muslims or folk religion in general. The most common evangelism approach they used, now used by most Christian churches was *mjadala* (dialogue) which often turned into a debate. This dialogue was conducted through the interfaith initiatives in many parts of the region. Interfaith dialogues were peacefully carried out with both Christians and Muslims seated around the table to read and discuss the Bible and the Qur'an. However, in many parts of Kenya this approach did not work well, especially for many people in rural areas where they could not read and write well.

In the course of the researcher's ministry, as he focused more on unreached groups in his new assignment, he encountered Digo tribal people of the South Coast of Kenya, who were one of the nine tribes of the coastal strip of Kenya and Tanzania known as the *Mijikenda* (literally translated as "nine families"). The Digo people, before 1895, lived in the countryside, which was known as the *Nyika* (bush), on the South Coast of Mombasa, Kenya (Salim 1973:25). The Digo are surprisingly nearly all Muslim (99.9percent) and have a population of 333,000 in Kenya, and speak the Chidigo and Kiswahili languages.

The religious distribution in the South Coast of Kenya (Digoland) is as follows: Buddhism is 0 percent, Christianity 0.10 percent (evangelical 0.05 percent), ethnic religions 20 percent (blended with Islam, African religious traditional (ATR) practices), Hinduism 0 percent, Islam 79.90 percent (Joshua project: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11557&rog3=KE>). I came to find out also that Islam was more widely accepted among the Digo than among any of the other *Mijikenda* tribes. However, ties with traditional practices<sup>4</sup> still had more impact on the Digo community than Islam.

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<sup>4</sup>The Digo's traditional practices includes animism, and ancestor worship. Animism is the belief that non-human objects have spirits. Ancestor worship is the practice of praying to deceased ancestors for help and guidance. One example of spiritism is their use of blood sacrifices. Such sacrifices are very significant to the Digo, especially in the exorcism of evil spirits. Witchdoctors are also consulted regularly (Joshua project: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11557&rog3=KE>).

Reaching the Digo people with the gospel was a challenge. The researcher coordinated the ministry in Adventist churches and talked with other Christian denominational leaders who were already working in the area who likewise found this ministry very difficult. The evangelism ministries that the Christians used, posed a lot of problems. *Mjadala* was the main approach used in this area and it was done in the open space. Sometimes when there were disagreements, the Muslims started to throw stones and even attempted to destroy churches in the area. The researcher recalls in the year 2008, when they organised a big open public interfaith *Mjadala*, which was sponsored by the SDA church at Ukunda South Coast of Kenya. Although, it was successfully completed after a duration of two weeks, it was not easy and the police had to be present at all times until it was over for protection purposes in case of any possible danger. Normally this approach was used to educate people on topics which Muslims had questions about, including Jesus the Son of God, the death of Jesus on the cross and many others. The dialogue approach was more of an extraction, where at times a Muslim accepted the gospel openly and then joined the Christian church, which resulted in many challenges for the converts and the church.

As the researcher was in North America for further studies, the evangelism approaches among the Digo people of the South Coast of Kenya continued to be a concern to him as he reflected on his previous ministry in Kenya. Henceforth, he wanted to know what the Christian churches (sample groups of different church denominations were selected) in the South Coast of Kenya have done so far in terms of evangelising the folk Muslims in the Digo tribe, the effects of those approaches, and what are the best means to effectively share the gospel with the Digo people. Therefore, it is the researcher's belief that the approaches of evangelising folk Muslims, which that is explained here, could have an impact in the South Coast of Kenya and beyond.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Following the researcher's ministry as Adventist Muslim Relations and evangelism director at the Seventh-day Adventist church (SDA), Kenya Coast Field in the South Coast of Kenya, the area that is heavily dominated by Muslims who follow folk Islam (popular Islam) developed a research question for the study; what is the effectiveness of approaches used by the Christian churches, thus, the African Inland Church (AIC), the Baptists Church (BC), the Gospel Revival Church (GRC), the Methodist Church (MC), the Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC), the Salvation Army (SA), and the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in doing missions to the Digo tribe Muslims of the South Coast of Kenya? The breaking up of the research question brought the following sub-questions that the study sought to answer.

1. What is the biblical and theological basis of Mission to people of other faiths?
2. What is the historical Christian mission among the Digo tribe?
3. What are the current trends of the current approaches used by the churches (AIC, B.C., GRC, MC, RGC, SA, and SDA) in doing missions at the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya?
4. What is the effective proposed model that churches can use in moving forward with the Mission among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya?

## 1.3 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

While serving in the ministry for eight years, four of which the researcher served as AMR director or coordinator in Mombasa, Kenya, he realised that among the *Mijikenda* tribes, more specifically the Digo tribe of South Coast of Kenya, their vast majority follows informal varieties of Islamic practices rather than a formal or conventional version of Islam. He also observed that many aspects of the Digo faith were heavily influenced by traditional practices, which posed a serious challenge for the churches in their attempt to evangelise them with the gospel within their context. Although, various Christian churches work hard in

reaching out with the Gospel to the Digo tribe, there is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of developing the best approaches which would meet them at their point of need. As Cate (1992) in his article, “What will it take to win Muslims?” suggests, Mission agencies need to think about developing new ministries in places where Muslims constitute the majority, like the Digo where 99.9 percent are folk Islam (Joshua project: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11557&rog3=KE>).

This study examined evangelism approaches that the Christian churches are using with the Digo tribe Muslims of the South Coast of Kenya, with the purpose of suggesting possible approaches of sharing the gospel of Christ Jesus with them. This would be significant in helping the churches within the area and beyond to reach the folk Muslims with the gospel and achieve better results.

#### **1.4 THE MAIN AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The researcher developed this study’s topic from the setting of his ministry as AMR and evangelism director with the SDA church, Kenya coast field. He served and coordinated several evangelistic activities among people of other faiths, particularly Muslims. In other words, his topic was derived from the world of everyday life (Mouton 2001:138).

The researcher’s ministry, among Muslims, has lead him to the world of science and scientific research (ibid) where the study mainly sought to understand the effectiveness of evangelism approaches among folk Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. One of the objectives of the study was to bring about an awareness to the churches about the importance of Biblical and theological basis of Mission to the people of other faiths. The second objective of the study was to explore the historical perspective of Mission among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya. The third objective was to investigate the current trends of the current approaches used by the churches in doing Mission work at the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya. The fourth objective of the study was to propose an effective model of

evangelism that the churches in the South Coast of Kenya could use in moving forward with Mission among the Digo tribe folk Muslims.

## **1.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study focused on the folk Islam practices among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya, and the evangelism approaches various Christian churches are using to communicate the Gospel of Christ Jesus to the Digo tribal Muslims.

The result of the study, therefore, did not accurately reflect on the conditions in other Christian churches outside the South Coast of Kenya and conclusions made from the sampled churches were specifically focused on the folk Islam among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya. Nevertheless, the results may challenge and motivate other churches with similar situations in Muslim evangelism elsewhere.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This thesis investigation falls into four principal groupings: (1) academic books and periodicals (2) interviews (3) Christian literature (4) and other recent and relevant scholarly articles.

### **1.6.1 Academic books and articles**

In 1993 Allan wrote about the earlier settlement of the Arabs which dates from 950 to 1050. He describes the expansion of Islam in East Africa in 950, when a new population settled in the East Coast of Africa. They came from Saudi Arabia and settled in Manda, Kilwa, and Old Kipini. Most of these settlers were traders and some of them had religious backgrounds (24). Moreover, Odeb (1974:8) posits, “after the appearance of Islam, and particularly from the tenth century onward, there is evidence of trading stations and settlements of Muslim merchants along the coast. However, the local residents along the coast of East Africa and Zanzibar and in Pemba remained largely pagan”. He further

discusses the fourth period of 1498 to 1698, which included two years under the rule of the Portuguese in East Coast of Africa. Odeb (1974) explains how the Arabs were friendly to the native Africans in market places, and this made it quite easy for them to work towards a trade language, Swahili, which later on became the basis for understanding the East African Islamic culture.

On the side of the Digo tribe, McIntosh (1968:206) and Salim (1973:25) provide a description of their migration history from Shungwaya to Kwale and other implications of that immigration.

On the other hand, Prestholdt (2001:395) mentions the interruption of the Portuguese between 1498 -1698. For two years, the Portuguese ruled and hindered the spread of Islam through suppression of the Islamic trade centres. This was the first time that Islam encountered Christianity in East Africa. This was possible because along with the Portuguese traders and merchants, missionaries came from Christian Portugal. As Prestholdt (2001:393) puts it, “their endeavour to plant churches at the coast was fruitless; hence no evidence of their witness, except probably the sign of Christianity from Portuguese era in Mombasa is Fort Jesus structure right beside the Indian Ocean. However, the Portuguese’s main aim for East Africa was trade with the Swahili people.”

Nicholls (1971:21) also details in his book how the Arab Omanis’ rule was related to the Sultans in the period of 1698 to 1890. The Arabs from Oman were great maritime traders because they possessed ports that occupied very favourable positions along the trade routes of the Indian Ocean. He further shows how the Portuguese controlled trade in East Africa as well as had a dominant force in the Oman Kingdom. However, Oman decided to revolt against the Portuguese and with the help of the Dutch, they pushed the Portuguese out of the Persian Gulf. Further, the Omanis continued to fight the Portuguese abroad, along the coast of Kenya and Tanzania, including the control bases of the Europeans on the Indian Ocean

Islands. Additionally, Nicholls (1971:21) posits “The Omanis therefore, laid siege to Fort Jesus in Mombasa, the bastion of Portuguese rule on the Swahili Coast, and in 1698 it fell to them, and this event ushered in a period of Omani influence.” This information is vital for my thesis since it establishes how Islam was spread in the East Coast of Africa, including the South Kenya coast which is the homeland of the Digo tribe.

In 1997, Lamin Sanneh, consequently, provided important information on how the Muslims took a favourable view of African’s religious openness to Islam, even though they did not know how to read the Qur’an since it was written in Arabic. According to the researcher, Sanneh (1997:12) affirms that, “Muslims took a favourable view of Africa’s openness, found affinity with certain practices, capitalised on shared understanding, exploited gaps in local techniques and resources, and then, asserted the primacy of Muslim Scripture, law and practice.”

Sanneh (1997:147). gives the exact impression of the Digo tribe, since very few of them could read and understand the Qur’an in the Arabic language. For the Digo to be Islamized, Islam had to be adapted into the Digo religious fabric in terms of rituals and some beliefs, and the Qur’an had to be translated from Arabic into their dialect, but still it had to be learned in its original language, Arabic (ibid)

In 1993, David C. Sperling wrote a detailed research treatise on the impact of Qur’an schools (*chuo*) and the Islamic schools (Madrasas) in Islamizing the Digo people. His work shows how the rural Madrasas provided the younger generations of Muslims with deeper religious training. In 1993, Balda also pointed out on how the use of Swahili language for religious instruction had greatly influenced the Islamization of the Digo. Balda enlightens my understanding that there were two main Swahili journals published for the African Muslim in East, Central and South Africa. For instance, *Sauti ya Umma* (The voice of the community) was printed in the Islamic republic of Iran by *Taasisi ya Fikra za Kiislamu* (The

foundation of Islamic thought) and *Mizani* (scale), this was published by *Umoja wa kiislamu wa Mlingano wa Dini* (Union of Muslim preachers of related religions), which was based in Tanzania.

Trimingham's (1980) book, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*- second edition. Provides a description of the religious life of African Muslims. He shows the significant things in terms of performance of the rites and adoption of customs that differentiates between the believer and the others, that is how the beliefs of the Muslims were accepted even though they were not well known. I found this to be interesting, where Trimingham argues that Islam for normal adherents is not an intellectual exercise but a system of life. Trimingham has helped me understand the major points for Islamic penetration into East Africa.

### **1.6.2 Christian books and scholarly articles**

In the process of research, I discovered some books and articles on the topic from the Christian perspective. These articles deal with folk Islam in Africa and are comprised of brief case studies. Phil Parshall's (2015) *Bridges of Islam: a Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* draws upon his ministry experience in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Robin Hadaway's 2011 University of South Africa (UNISA) doctoral thesis, *Contextualization and Folk Islam: A Case Study in the Sudan*, deals with contextualisation as the best way to evangelise tribes or groups that embrace folk Islam. Hadaway focused on the Beja and Sukuma tribes of Sudan and Tanzania for his case study. I found this helpful in understanding the Digo of Kenya who practice folk Islam as well.

Stephen Mutuku Sesi's 2003 Fuller Theological Seminary doctoral dissertation was a perceptive study about the Digo Muslims. Although, his title was on prayer among the Digo Muslims of Kenya and its implications for Christian witness, he has provided a well-elaborated study about the Digo culture, beliefs, values and worldviews prior to being



Islamized. I found this study helpful in my attempt to research my topic. Sesi's observations of Digo Muslim practices form the basis for many of the conclusions I intend to draw in my thesis. Other unpublished theses I found to be useful for my research were, Strategic considerations for church planting among the Digo of Kenya (1996), Oral contextualisation: communicating Biblical truth to the Digo of Kenya (Hartnell, Malcolm Richard, 1996), and the Digo of the South Kenya Coast: description and annotated bibliography by Lundebj, Erling Andreas 1993.

Parshall's books were helpful for my research. A few other missiological books, though, exist on the examination of evangelism approaches specifically to folk religion. *The Influence of Animism on Islam in Tanzania* by Darrel A. Swanson (2003) scrutinises folk Islam from a very clear perspective. I also found the book by Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou (1999), *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* to be appropriate in setting the standard for examining folk Islam within the broader religion field.

The useful sections regarding overall evangelism approaches to Muslims and to folk Muslims particularly appear in three other works. First, Muller (2009) expounds how an evangelistic approach that is shaped towards a particular worldview effectively involves people of a certain culture. Secondly, Mark Terry (1996) in the book, envisioning effective ministry: *Evangelism in a Muslim Context* edited by Laurie Fortunak Nichols and Gary R. Corwin (2010), presents approaches to the evangelisation of Muslims; he argues that the approaches to Muslim evangelisation fall into five major categories.

## **1.7 EVANGELISM APPROACHES TO MUSLIMS**

The approaches Mark Terry (in Nichols & Corwin 2010:207) examined in this section are the basis for the study of evangelism and folk Muslims among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya, who are among the mostly unreached population groups in Kenya.

### 1.7.1 The Confrontational/ debate approach

Pikkert (2008:30) shows that polemic<sup>5</sup> or debate dominated in many examples of Christian interaction with Muslims during the era of the late Ottoman Empire (1800 to 1918). He continues to say that even though Christian workers had much knowledge of Islam, the majority of them identified Muhammad as the antichrist mentioned in the Bible (John 2:18, 22) and called the Qur'an a false book that encourages all manner of fleshly desires (Pikkert 2008 :30).

Terry (in Nichols and Corwin 2010:206) affirms that this approach is not widely used today. Missionaries such as Henry Martyn, Karl Pfander and St. Clair Tidall, who tried to win Muslims by public debate, used it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They debated in market places and produced apologetic and polemical literature in English and the vernacular. However, this approach was never successful in terms of converts, but instead often aroused increased Muslim hostility towards Christians (Nichols & Corwin 2010:205). According to the researcher, in the South Coast of Kenya, this approach is still used by both Christians and Muslims, and it has created a lot of hostility between the two communities. In some cases, it has resulted in the loss of life and property, more especially when Muslims are defeated in a debate, or are offended in the process. For Phil Parshall (1998), instead of missionaries using confrontational debate with Muslims, they should prioritise the use a “classic” approach (Nichols & Corwin 2010:205). In the twentieth century, Schlorff (2008:13) terms the debate or polemic approach as the ‘direct approach.’ In the sense that direct approach favours polemic arguments only as the last option, at the same time the direct approach also favours adherence to a non-circuitous presentation of the Gospel. J. Christy Wilson, Sr., has said in the middle of the twentieth century that “today he who would present Christ to the Moslem

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<sup>5</sup> Guralnik (1970:1102) say that being polemic when you are involved with “argumentation, disputation, and controversial discussion.” This approach is still used in some parts of the world, for instance in Kenya is widely used, although those who use it, confuse it with dialogue approach.

heart should be an expert in avoiding arguments” (in Schlorff 2006:13). For the Digo, Christians Sesi (2003:200) says that they “live in fear of being persecuted, so they avoid any possible confrontation with Islamic teachers or followers as much as possible.” However, some are still using this approach although many are avoiding it. This will be further examined in this course of the study.

### **1.7.2 Traditional evangelical approach**

This approach, as Terry (1996) explains was pioneered by Samuel Zwemer in 1867 to 1952 who was known to be the “apostle to the Muslims,” however, during the early 1890 and 1916 he seemed to be inclined towards confrontation (Nichols & Corwin 2010:206). Zwemer believed that evangelism should emphasise the incarnation, atonement, and mediation of Christ. He encouraged evangelists to call Muslims to repentance, submission to Christ, and to get involved in the church. In the later years, Zwemer supported witnessing to individuals and small groups. He advised his students to engage in friendship evangelism, for he believed that human personality was the best bridge for communicating the gospel (Nichols & Corwin 2010:207). He denied the idea of allowing a convert to remain in Islam as long as possible to influence other Muslims. This approach is known to have originated in Western style churches in the sense that missionaries told their converts to break away from Islam and publicly identify with a church (ibid).

This approach also poses many challenges to the Muslim converts and to the missionary churches as well. On the side of the converts, they may lose lives and properties, in accordance to the Muslim law that forbids them from joining any other religion apart from Islam. The church may be burnt down or the missionaries may also lose their lives in the process. The church can also face the challenge of taking care of these new converts in case their families abandon them. Critics to this approach say that it is too Western; while the defenders say, it is biblically sound, as they see it from their perspective as sowing the seed

that could bear fruit in time. The approach, although said to be too Western, is still being used by some churches<sup>6</sup> in the South Coast of Kenya to evangelise Digo Muslims. However, Muller (2000:30) affirms that successful evangelists have not used this approach as a Mission strategy.

### **1.7.3 Institutional approach**

Subsequently, many denominational<sup>7</sup> missions are using the institutional approach in Muslim countries. They have tried to win Muslims through hospitals, schools, and orphanages; with an assumption that by demonstrating love, kindness, and humility through this approach, the walls of prejudice will break down. Fry and King (1980:133), mention that some missiologists say that more teachers, doctors, nurses, and agriculturalists should be sent to Muslim countries since their deeds will speak louder than words (Nichol & Corwin 2010:207). This approach is still valid in some places where institutions<sup>8</sup> have been established. They are known to help overcome prejudice and win a hearing for the gospel. In the South Coast of Kenya, among the Digo Muslim communities, the approach has yet to be established.

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<sup>6</sup> The churches I am referring to here are the Seventh-day Adventist churches (SDA). They are about ten of them, and almost all of them you are hardly find a Digo member, if they at are very few. I used to be an overseer pastor in charge of evangelism in whole coast province, South Coast of Kenya included.

<sup>7</sup> Denominations such Presbyterians and Congregationalist, Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) and other mission boards like the Foreign board of the Southern Baptist Convention has operated three hospitals in Arab countries as well schools and orphanages in Lebanon, Jordon, and Israel Terry (in Nichols and Corwin). The SDA church also operates a University in Lebanon, and a non-governmental organization (NGO) call Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) which is also operated in almost all countries of Africa (I know this because I am a pastor of the SDA church).

<sup>8</sup> Although this approach is good, but Terry (in Nichol and Corwin 2010:207) say that the institutions are facing difficult times, and the governments are taking their services. Also, due the inflation, to maintain them is hard. However, in some countries like Yemen, institutions are the only Christian presence allowed by their government.

#### 1.7.4 Dialogue approach

This approach is known to have been pioneered by Temple Gaidner (1873-1928) and then more fully developed and popularised by Kenneth Gragg (1968). It is motivated by the sincere love that seeks to reconcile Muslims and Christians (Nichols & Corwin 2010:207). Gragg (1968), further says that the approach calls for Muslim and Christian unity in Christ, in other words, the dialogue style views Christianity, and not relocating Islam but rather accomplishing what is already there (Schlorff 2006:20). Schlorff (:21) writes about Cragg's views as follows, "this involves the principle of open religion; Christianity and an Islam open not just to a clearer understanding of their own sources but also to truth from other sources and perspectives. Yet Christ represents in some sense the fulfillment of both".

Moreover, Terry (in Nichols & Corwin 2010:10) provides Register's four purposes of dialogue namely:

- To learn what Muslims believe and to appreciate their beliefs in relation to their culture;
- To seek to establish both contact and report on the basis of sincere, honest friendship;
- To learn how to witness to them; and
- To ultimately bring them to salvation in Christ.

However, Terry argues that this approach should not be confused with syncretic, universalistic dialogues sponsored by some ecumenical groups. Instead, it affirms missionaries in a way that permits them to grow in their understanding of Muslims rather than to surrender (in Nichols & Corwin 2010 :207).

On the other hand, as much this approach's good intentions could be, it also been noted to cause problems among Muslims and Christians, as Pikkert (2008:187) writes as follows:

Interreligious dialogue is also at a theological impasse. Muslims have real difficulty with the fact that Christians are reluctant to accept the authenticity of Muhammad as a

post-Christ prophet who received a major message from heaven (Nasr 1996-97:13). Christians, on the other hand, feel that the Muslims' recognition of Jesus does not really cost them anything, while a 'corresponding recognition of Mohammad by Christians would go against everything they are told by the weightiest religious documents in their possession' (Zebiri 2000:5). Thus, instead of leading to mutual understanding, with many Christians, once again, portraying Islam as the last great enemy to be conquered.

Indeed, although this approach seems to be having its own challenges, I still don't have any idea as to what extent this approach has been used by the Christian denominations in the South Coast of Kenya in evangelising the Digo tribe.

### **1.7.5 Contextual approach**

This is the approach according to Terry (in Nichols & Corwin 2010:207), where the missionaries attempt by all possible means to become like Muslims for the sake of gospel presentation in religious and cultural forms that Muslims can identify with. Byang H. Kato (in Hesselgrave 2000:33) tries to provide his meaning of this contextualisation approach by saying, "we understand the term to mean making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation." Bruce Nichols also (in Hesselgrave and Rommen 2000:33) says following.

Contextualisation is the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into a verbal form that is meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultural groups and within their particular situations.

George Peters (in Hesselgrave and Rommen 2000:34) also asserts that this approach should be based on the correct exegesis of the biblical text in order to be authentic.

Hesselgrave (2000:35) explains the confusion over the term contextualisation, which is known as contextual for evangelicals. He says that for them, they are struggling with the acceptance of this term, by saying:

"...but only a series of proposals, all of them vying for acceptance...It is lot incumbent upon them to agree on the precise wording of a definition, but it is essential that they agree on the criteria necessary for an authentic biblical contextualisation, that they be able to ..., and that they actually contextualise the gospel and theology in ways that will commend themselves both to God and to their hearers.

Notwithstanding the absence of settlement on a proper meaning of contextualisation, missiologists support the theory when supported by the Biblical truth (Van Reenen 2006:4).

Hesselgrave (in Van Reenen 2006:4) affirms that:

“Acceptable contextualisation is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The result of this process may vary in form and intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of meaning prescribed by the biblical text’.”

Terry gives Massih’s views (in Nichols & Corwin 2010:207) that the contextual approach does not forget “the offence of the gospel,” but seeks to avoid the objectionable factor. At the same time, it calls for a change in the missionary lifestyle, worship forms, theological terms, and strategy.

Mark Terry (ibid) further explains Anderson’s take on this approach. He indicates that supporters of contextualisation argue that the missionary strategy for Muslim evangelism needs a major overhaul. First, the missionary has to make the initial contact with Muslim leaders even if they do not become Christians, hence making him or her to reduce the possibility of obvious opposition by befriending them.

Secondly, people on the fringes of society should not be the focus of the witness, but rather be opinion leaders of the community. Thirdly, families, relatives, and groups of friends should be the initial conversion goal rather than individuals. Fourthly, in the beginning only basic theological concepts should be presented. Following this point, adequate time is allowed for the change to take place, Parshall (2015) as well affirms this idea (ibid). Lastly, converts are not to be encouraged to reject Islam, instead, they are allowed to remain in the state in which they were called (see I Corinthians 7:20). By so doing, it might influence their friends to Christianity. Another point is that baptisms should be postponed, to allow converts to get greater opportunity to win other Muslims since it is seen as a political act in some countries. The missionaries should be encouraged to study animistic practices among

Muslims to discover areas of felt needs, hence, they could provide useful points of evangelistic contact.

Sesi (2003:228) indicates that to use the contextualisation approach among the Digo requires team work between the translators, Bible interpreters, church planters, pastors, and evangelists. He further emphasises that the three need to work together to accomplish the task. This approach itself has many types, which were examined in the main study of this research. According to the researcher, all the evangelism approaches among the Muslims that are covered in this literature review have set the basis of my study of evangelism and folk Islam in the South Coast of Kenya, in case study form. Consequently, Sesi (2003) further recommends that there is need for research on how the churches in Digoland, especially indigenous churches, have contextualised the gospel to Digo culture, which the researcher felt the need to study.

## **1.8 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

The research utilised a qualitative type of case study that is based on observation, interviews, and appropriate written documents (Ormrod 2005:135). I preferred the qualitative research of a case study because it allows for in-depth inquiry; it produces first-hand information, in that participants work in natural settings. This method encourages familiarity and close contact with the research participants. It allows for the employment of a variety of interrelated methods and sources while implying long term contacts and personal experiences in the field. It focuses on direct and verifiable life experiences and it produces information that covers the whole unit and not only small aspects of it (Sarantakos 2005:216).

This research likewise, was more grounded in a philosophical position, which is normally concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted. The researcher aimed to produce rounded and contextual understandings based on rich and detailed data. Thus, it puts more emphasis on the holistic



forms of analysis and explanation than on the charting surface patterns, trends and correlation (Mason, 2002:3-4).

Additionally, I found Yin's (1989:23) definition of a case study research helpful, as he defines it as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple source of evidence are used." More often, case study research tends to take a qualitative perspective, concerned with exploring, describing, and explaining a phenomenon.

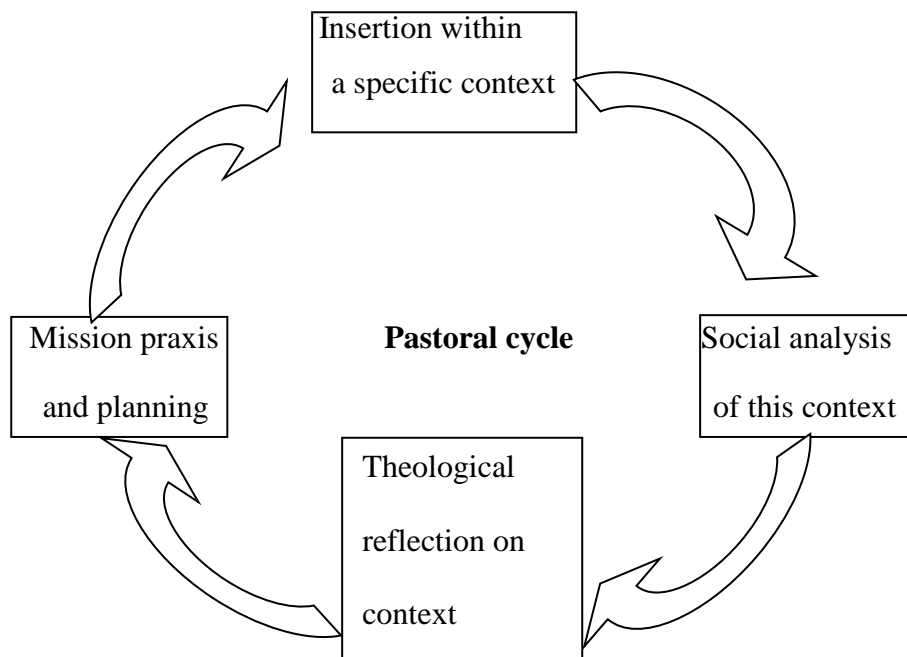
Since in qualitative research, human beings occupy a central position; they create the meaning systems of events by constructing reality. Most writers on the subject have no general laws that are restrictive in nature. In spite of this, patterns and regularities of behaviour emerge because of social conventions, which are established through interaction (Sarantakos 2005:41-42). This helped the researcher to collect sufficient data and explain the phenomenon clearly and in-depth. This approach supported the ideal of interaction between the researcher and the participants, hence, in the process, it had a significant impact.

Consequently, the approach employed in this kind of research was inductive, which proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. In this type of research, knowledge is derived through the sense of understanding meaning and interpretations (Sarantakos 2005:42). The researcher employed more of an applied missiological approach than an academic one. The research focused on practical theology, thus, more on application than theoretical. It therefore served as the best instrument for conducting an in-depth study of the research problem at hand in the field. This forms the primary focus under which the research topic was investigated within its scope.

## **1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design this study adopted was a case study design. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 135) points out that “in a case study, a particular individual, programme, or event is studied in-depth for a defined period of time”. In this case study, evangelism approaches were studied in-depth as applied in evangelising the Digo tribe in the South Coast of Kenya who are heavily influenced by folk Islam. The study embraced and followed a pastoral cycle of praxis, which was developed and used by Holland and Henriot (1984), hence, modified by Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen (1991) in the of South African context. Originally, this method was developed by Holland and Henriot (1984:7-9) and used in their approach to social analysis. The pastoral cycles, included four elements, which were insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. In their argument, they indicate that the four moments of pastoral cycle are linked up and overlapped. These moments are different elements of one body and with different stages that make up the cycle of praxis (Cochrane, de Gruchy & Petersen 1991:14).

Below is the pastoral cycle diagram of Holland and Henriot, which describes how the process works.



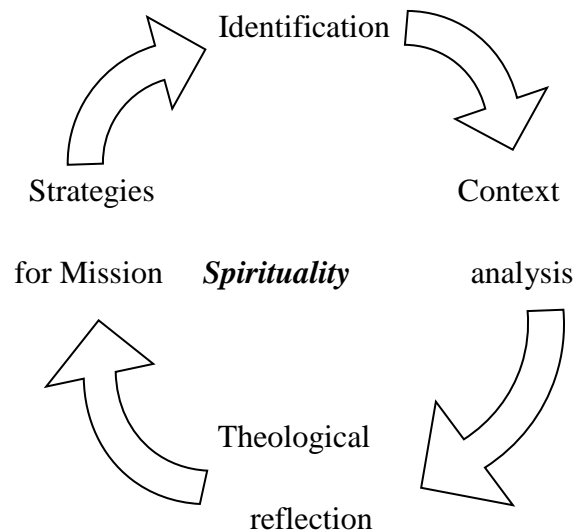
**Figure 1. The Pastoral Cycle Praxis**

Moreover, the same developed pastoral cycle of Halland and Henriot (1983), Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen (1991) used it to develop their seven dimensions of pastoral cycle as well. These seven dimensions include prior commitment, which provides a direction towards the “kingdom” of God, the moment of insertion, social analysis, ecclesial analysis, theological reflection, spiritual formation or empowerment, pastoral planning and praxis.

In Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen’s (1991:14) method, there are four more moments or elements which are known as faith commitment which explains the pre-understanding and perspective that precedes the moment of insertion. There is also the ecclesial analysis, which finds the church and its Mission within their social context. There is retrieval of the tradition, which among theological reflections; spiritual formation and empowerment, also links theological reflection to pastoral planning and praxis.

This research only used four moments, thus, insertion, which is referred by Kareck (2005) as identification; spiritual and social analysis, which is referred as context analysis by Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen (1991:18) and Karecki (2005:162). The theological reflection as developed by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (1984:7), and pastoral planning,

which Karecki calls strategies for Mission (2005:162) are also included. The researcher used the cycle praxis by exploring it and then tried to present it by suggesting to the Christian churches within the South Coast of Kenya for their attempts at evangelising the Digo folk Muslims. The praxis that are explored, are as follows as in in figure two below:



**Figure 2. The Cycle of Praxis**

In using the identification moment, the researcher was seeking to identify both the present and the past methods of evangelism among the Muslims in the East Coast of Africa. In order to establish this, the study attempted to examine the Digo tribe immigration and development in terms of their pre-Islamic culture. In other words, the researcher investigated the Digo tribe migration and their settlement in the East Coast Region of Africa. The context analysis moment attempted to deal with issues of Digo's social and ecclesial life. The growth of the pre-Islamic Digo worldview was analysed in terms of cultural composition, religious values and beliefs. The arrival of Islam in Africa was examined and analysed, specifically the stages of Islam penetration in Africa in terms of trade and settlement in its specific period of time (950-1050). In terms of how the Muslims and Africans mingled together in the market place, the effect of intermarriages between the Arabs and the African (Bantu) women and slavery were discussed. This included the Shirazian period which is from 1050 to 1500, the

Portuguese interruption as from 1498 to 1698, the Oman period from 1698 to 1890, and also the effect of Madrasas among the Digo tribe from 1900 to 1990 which was also discussed within its context.

In this same design, the traditional religious values and beliefs, the historical arrival of Islam to Digo tribe was analysed. The case study as a design was especially appropriate for learning more about a little understood situation including the evangelism and folk Islam in South Coast of Kenya (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:135). By applying the right methods of qualitative research, the researcher was able to arrive at a point where he was able to suggest the best approach suitable for the churches that were attempting to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to folk Muslims and in this case specifically the Digo Muslims.

In order to arrive at this best approach, the study further used the ecclesial analysis to examine evangelism and its implications for Mission, in terms of the history of Christian historical Mission among the Digo tribe of Kenya from the impact of Portuguese missionaries since 1498 to 1700. The effect of missionaries such as Ludwig Kraft and Jonannes Rebmann since 1844 to 1875, and Church Missionary Society (CMS) since 1875 to 1914 was also used. The configuration of Mission among the Digo people was analysed in-depth within this same context. Following the clear logical sequence mentioned and proper case study design methodology, this study produced the desired outcome, which was suitable for the churches which are striving to share the gospel with folk Muslims in Digo land of Kenya and beyond.

The moment of theological reflection helped the researcher by taking him back to the Bible as the Word of God, as it played a greater role in setting the basis of the theological understanding of the best approach. This is suggested in the evangelisation of the Digo tribe where their Islam religion is heavily influenced by their traditional values and beliefs. In making use of the cycle of praxis in this field of research, various disciplines were described in an integrated way. The research is explained missiologically and it follows social science

approaches since it investigated the evangelism approaches among the Digo folk Islam in the South Coast of Kenya.

### **1.10 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

This study focused on the folk Islam among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya who are about 300,000 according to Joshua project:

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11557&rog3=KE>). The effectiveness of evangelism approaches of various Christian churches that were used to communicate the Gospel to the Digo Muslims were examined.

The Christian Community in the South Coast of Kenya is comprised of The Anglican Church (30 percent), Independent churches (35 percent), Protestant churches (25 percent), and Roman Catholics (10 percent). The study selected and focused on only one or two churches from each of the Christian Communities listed herein, which were deeply involved in Muslim evangelism among the Digo tribal people.

Sampling, being the process by which decisions are made concerning what and how to sample the study. A non-probability purposive sampling technique (Leedy& Ormrod 2005: 206) was used to acquire a sample of participants that helped in collecting the information based on how the seven selected churches were communicating the Gospel to the Digo Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya.

The targeted population was drawn from the seven different Christian denominational churches with a total of about 78 participants and 3 focus groups, thus, the Muslim background believers (MBBs), church leaders, and frontline evangelists. The focus groups were distributed as follows: (1) Africa Inland Church (AIC), 3 focus groups were interviewed; (2) Baptist church (B.C.) (there were two Digo Churches between Mombasa and Kwale), 3 focus groups were interviewed; (3) GRC, three focus groups were involved in the interview; (4) Methodist Church (MC), 3 focus groups were interviewed; (5) Redeemed

Gospel Church (RGC), 3 focus groups were interviewed; (6), 3 focus groups were interviewed; (6) Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), (7) Salvation Army (SA), 3 focus groups interviews were conducted; (The distribution of participants' participation by a Christian denomination is clearly illustrated in table 1 below).

**Table 1. Participants distribution by church denomination**

Church denomination	Frequency	Percentage
African Inland Church (AIC)	11	14.1
Baptists Church (BC)	12	15.4
Gospel Revival Church (GRC)	13	16.7
Methodist Church (MC)	8	10.3
Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC)	10	12.8
Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)	15	19.2
Salvation Army (SA)	9	11.5
Total	78	100

The sample selection of the participants as shown in table 1 above was done randomly from the three focus groups from each church. Thus, Muslim background believers (MBBs), church leaders and frontline evangelists who were engaging in doing Mission among the Digo tribe Muslims in South Coast of Kenya. Moreover, the above listed churches were selected due to their Muslim evangelism involvements in the area. The variation in numbers is due to the difference in the sizes of the seven churches, some of them had less membership as compared to others; however, the difference was not big as such. The church population growth in this region was slow because of the large number of Muslims.who were hardly ready to accept the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for many years. These were face-to-

face interviews. This was done to acquire a clear view on the effectiveness of the evangelism approaches used by the Christians denominations in communicating the Gospel to the Digo folk Muslims.

### **1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methods the researcher used to collect the data for this study included observations, interviews, and documents<sup>9</sup>. These methods are suitable in case studies that use qualitative research. In the same sense, this helped the researcher to collect extensive data from individual(s), programme(s) and event(s) on which the investigation was focused (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:135). Yin (2003:86-96) also says that there are six possible sources for data collection for case studies namely documents, archival records, direct observations from interviews, participant- observation, and physical artefacts. Yin further emphasises that the benefits from these six sources of data collection could be maximised if three principles are followed which are the use of multiple sources of evidence, the creation of a case study database and maintaining the chain of evidence. Gillham (2000) also concurs that the use of multiple sources of evidence as a "key characteristic of case study research" (Gillham 2000: 2) is the reason that "all evidence is of some use to the case study researcher and nothing is turned away" (Gillham 2000:20). Another fundamental characteristic he points out to is that "you do not start out with *a priori* theoretical notions" (ibid).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135-136), in case studies the researchers record details about the context surrounding the case. This includes information about the physical environment and any historical, economic and social factors that have a bearing in

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<sup>9</sup>The documents that will be used in the study includes website articles, newspapers magazines, books, thesis, and dissertations of other post-graduate students, all this will help the researcher to substantiate the collected data as it will be as well considered in the literature review section of the study. Documents can be used as well for making inferences about events. They can be communications between parties in the study (Yin 1995).



the situation (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:135-136). This researcher considered all these factors as the issues of evangelism and folk Islam among the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya which were investigated.

#### **1.11.1 Direct observation**

In case studies, direct observation is used when the field visit is conducted during the case study. This could be as simple as casual data collection activities or formal protocols to measure and record behaviours of people individually or in groups (Sarantakos 2005:223; Yin 2003:99). This method was helpful for it provided additional information about the topic being studied, which was evangelism approaches and folk Islam within the Digo tribe of Kenya. It is recommended that when this type of observation is done so that the researcher should be as unobtrusive as the wallpaper (Glesne & Peshkin 1992:45).

#### **1.11.2 Participant-observation**

This type of observation turns the researcher into an active participant in the events being studied. This often occurs in studies of neighbourhoods or groups. This technique provides some unusual opportunities for collecting data. This study used participant-observation as well, since the researcher was able join in events of the group of people he studied and observed from the inside (Sarantakos 2005:220). Hofstee (2006:127 indicates that this method refers to personal experience and observation of groups in their natural settings. This method suited the researcher well because he had lived and worked among the Digo tribe and participated in many events of the ministry such as interfaith-based evangelisms within the South Coast Region of Kenya. In this study, the researcher was considered as the insider rather than an outsider. It made it easier for him as he conducted his observation on the ground.

### **1.11.3 Interviews**

The second method the researcher used besides direct and participant observations was the interviews since they were also one of the most important sources of gathering the data for case study research. There are several forms of interviews that are conducted, these include open-ended, focused, and structured or survey interviews (Yin 2003:99). However, in qualitative research the most common interviews are the semi-structured and unstructured ones. More generally there are those that comply fully with the standards and principles of qualitative research.

According to Lamnek (1993:21-29), the methodological parameters and technical elements of qualitative interviewing helped the researcher to understand the study by employing methods and a process of analysis, which researchers reflect upon in their subjective approach to the world. This also took into consideration the implications of the knowledge they produce for social life, which could be termed as reflexivity. The naturalism of the interviews was directed towards studying reality as it really was, on its own terms, as it was manifest in daily life events. The participants were seen to be as important as the researcher during the interviews. They were regarded as experts who provided valuable information. The interviews were therefore unstandardised, which means that the questions asked during the interview allowed freedom for the participants to express their views without external limitations. Openness was also necessary in order to allow for readiness to change, correct and adjust in the course of study as determined by the researcher. The researcher required flexibility, as he followed the course that emerged through the interview. Likewise, the interviews that were conducted, ascertained the researcher's personal experience as displayed in daily life. Finally, the findings that emerged from the study were interpreted during the interviewing process.

The researcher followed the criteria of the qualitative research case study in his interviews which states that the nature of questions formulated should be mostly open. The order of questions should not be binding, the interview should assume the primacy of the participant., The interviews are normally not controlled by anyone but are close to the subject, engaged, subjective and ethical. Probing or promptness is not controlled, the duration of interviews are relatively long, the details of interview are guided by the situation. The interviewees per study are usually few while the overall structure of the interview is flexible. The presentation of questions is as required and flexible, the number of interviewers is usually one while the nature of interviews is in a discussion form and the sample collation is not random but rather flexible and can be expanded (Sarantakos 2005:271). The researcher agrees with Pannas (1996:76-79), that these methodological and technical aspects show that qualitative interviews require more competence on the part of the interviewer and higher ability on the part of the participants to verbalise views, opinions and ideas. In this research, interviews were done face to face with the 3 focus groups from the seven selected churches, as mentioned in 1.10 above and each focus group was interviewed separately.

## **1.12 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The instrument the researcher used in this research was the unstructured interview schedule. The researcher made a list of well-formulated open-ended questions, for both the local church leaders and for the church organisational administrators. The researcher also served as a research instrument in a way of gathering the data. He accomplished this as an observer and as an interviewer. This is well supported by Peter (1994:77) as he defines the research instrument as means by which the data are collected in social sciences. The questions that were formulated covered the four moments or elements of cycle of praxis and included identification, context analysis, strategies for Mission, and theological reflection.

### **1.13 DATA ANALYSIS**

In a case study, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:136), the researcher often begins to analyse the data during the data collection process; hence, its initial conclusions are likely to influence the kind of data he or she seeks out and collects in later parts of the study through observations and interviews. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:202) further says that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected during the study. Subsequently, Creswell (1998) and Stake (1995) describe the five steps that the researcher has to go through in data analysis of a case study. The first step is the organisation of details about the case where the facts about the case are logically arranged. This can be done by using either index cards or a computer database (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:150). The second is the categorisation of the data collected, where categories are identified to help cluster data into meaningful groups. The third step is the interpretation of single instances of specific documents, occurrences, and other bits of data that can be examined for specific meaning that they may have in relation to the case in question. The fourth step is identification of patterns. This is where the data and their interpretations are scrutinised and the underlying themes and other patterns that characterise the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal, are seen. The fifth step is the synthesis and generalisations, where conclusions are drawn that may have implications beyond the specific case that has been studied.

In this study, the researcher aimed at using different means of breaking the anticipated large case study data into sizeable components. Additionally, the researcher made sure he fully understood the collected data by reading and going through it several times. He as well utilised the elements or moments of praxis as explained in the research design. All these were conducted in the context of studying evangelism approaches among the Digo tribe folk Muslims.

## **1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Some basic ethical considerations need to be observed in qualitative research because its structure involves interactions between the researcher and the participants. Therefore, the following ethical issues were taken into consideration in this study. The first issue had to do with the proper identification of the researcher. This had to do with not giving the participants false impressions about the researcher (Sarantakos 2005:18). In other words, the researcher's identity was clearly revealed in terms of who he was and all details of the study. On the side of the participants, the right to anonymity was applied by the researcher, meaning the participants' contributions remained anonymous as much as possible.

The second issue had to do with honesty and openness; in this regard the researcher provided clear information as to the type of questions, the degree of question sensitivity and the possible consequence of the questioning and the research in general (Sarantakos 2005:18). The next ethical consideration had to deal with the concern of the welfare of the participants, which included mental and physical health issues and their safety, possible embarrassment, guilt, discomfort, hazards or risks to the participants (Sarantakos 2005:21). This was taken into serious consideration by the researcher.

Another issue had to do with free and informed consent; the researcher did not put pressure on or deceive the participants (Sarantakos 2005:18). In other words, there was no deception and the researcher did not encourage the participants to take part in this study by deceiving them. It was a voluntary exercise on the participants' side. The next issue had to do with the right to privacy regarding their private lives; the researcher did not ask personal and sensitive questions if he realised that participants did not feel comfortable about disclosing such information (Sarantakos 2005:21). The participants' right to privacy was respected by the researcher at all cost. In other words, confidentiality was maintained. The participant's contributions were not made available to other people who were not part of the study. To

ensure confidentiality, the researcher kept names linked to data, but information that was disclosed to the public neither included the names of participants nor made it possible for the information to be linked to a particular participant (ibid). The last ethical issue the researcher took into serious consideration was the avoidance of plagiarism of sources, and therefore, in the study he made a commitment to avoid plagiarism by acknowledging all sources used.

## **1.15 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Biblical and Theological basis of Mission to people of other faiths

Chapter 3 The history Christian Mission among the Digo tribe

Chapter 4 Current trends of Mission to the Digo tribe

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Mission approaches of the selected churches to the Digo tribe

4.1.1 African Inland Church (AIC)

4.1.2 Baptists Church (B.C.)

4.1.3 Gospel Revival Church (GRC)

4.1.4 Methodist Church (MC)

4.1.5 Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC)

4.1.6 Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)

4.1.7 Salvation Army (SA)

4.2 The impact of current approaches to Mission to the Digo tribe

4.3 Data analysis

4.3.1 Insertion (identification) analysis within the Digo tribe folk Islam context

4.3.2 Social analysis

4.3.3 Theological reflection

4.3.4 Research implication for Mission response

## Chapter 5 A Proposed model to effective approach to Mission among the Digo tribe

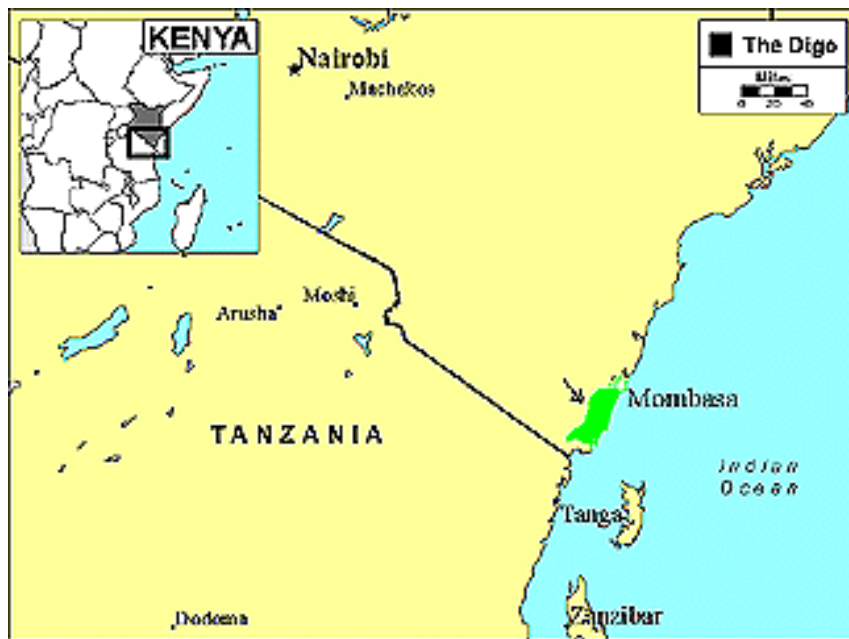
5.1 Applying the pastoral cycle of praxis appropriately

5.2 Theories of effective model for Mission among the Digo tribe

5.3 Biblically based model for Mission among the Digo tribe

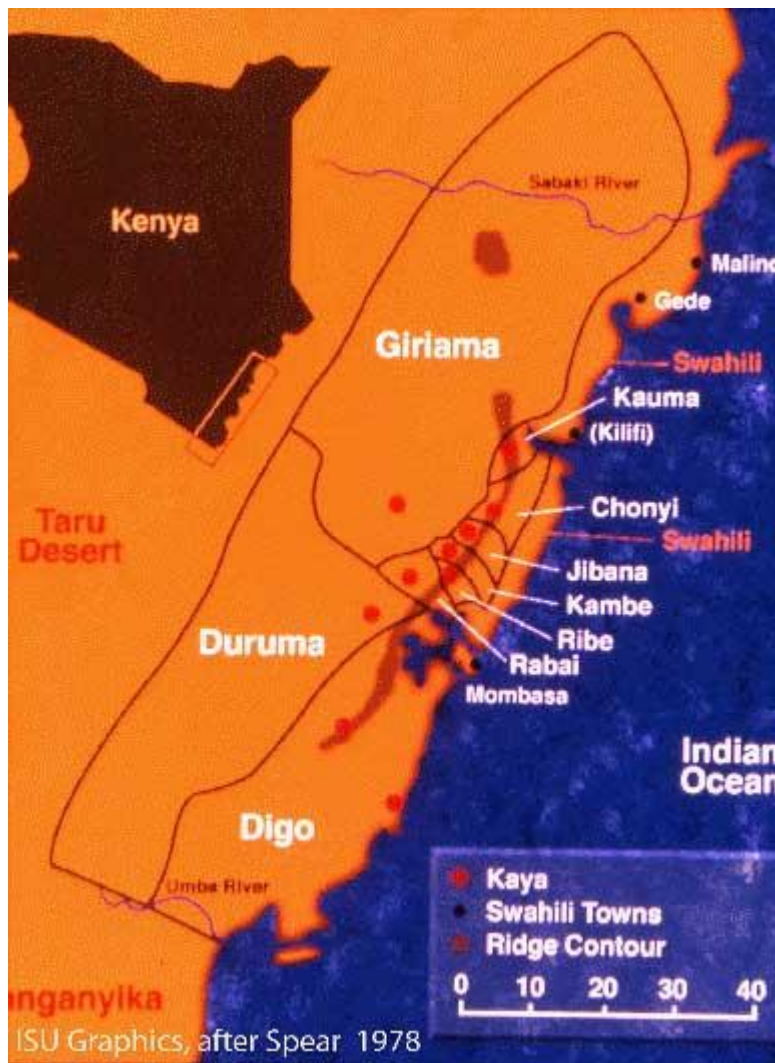
5.4 Conclusion and recommendations of the study

**Figure 3. A map showing Digo's homeland in the south of Kenya**



Source: Joshua project: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11557&rog3=KE>

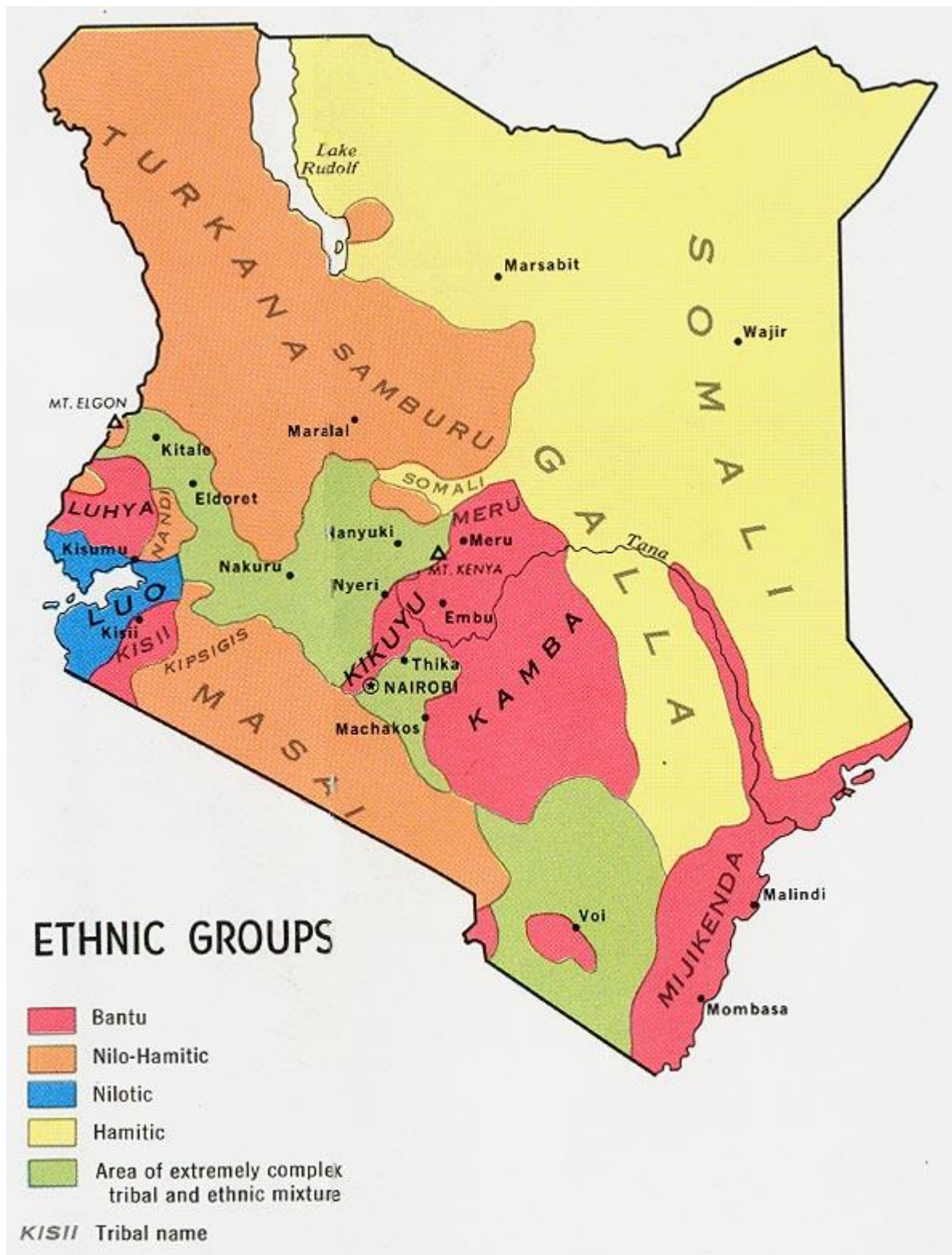
**Figure 4. A map showing the homeland of Mijikenda tribes**



**Source: The nine Mijikenda subgroups and their respective ritual centres (Makaya, sing. Kaya) at the end of the 19th century (adapted from Spear 1978:87).**



Figure 5. A map showing the ethnic groups in Kenya



Source : *Malaikaecorourism.com* Kenya

**Figure 6. Sample picture of Digo tribe ritual dance**



**Source:** *Malaikaecorourism.comkenya*

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF MISSION TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS**

There is a clear record in the Bible with at least 239 occasions when the people of God, the Old Testament patriarchs, Israelites, and the New Testament followers of Jesus came in contact with people of other religious traditions or faiths with the purpose of reaching them with the Word of God (Muck & Adeney 2009:33). These 239 encounters accordingly provide lessons to teach Christians how they can responsibly do Mission with people of other faiths such as Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and others (ibid).

The Bible, the Word of God, essentially from start to finish is a missionary book because it contains the inspired story of God Himself reaching out into human beings' history to reconcile a fallen and rebellious people to Himself and to restore his reign over all creation (Wright 2006:22-23; Van Till 1986:7). The Bible pictures two kinds of missionaries, going and sending missionaries, and God is clearly both. God sent many people. The variety of reasons for which people were sent is remarkable. The "Sending" language is used in many Biblical stories (Goldsmith 2014:92). Joseph was sent to be in a position in Egypt in order to save lives during famine (Gen 45:7). Moses was sent to deliver people from oppression and exploitation (Ex 3:10). Elijah was sent to affect the course of global politics (I Kings 19:15). Jeremiah was sent to proclaim the Word of God (Jer. 1:7). Jesus was sent to proclaim the good news, to proclaim freedom, to provide eyesight for the blind, and to release them from oppression (Luke 4:16-19; cf. Isa 61:1). The disciples were sent to preach and display the delivery and healing power of the reign of God (Matt 10:5-8). The Apostles also were sent to make disciples to baptise and teach (Matt 28:18-20). Mentioning but these few Biblical texts,

it is clear that the concept of sending<sup>10</sup> and being sent lies at the core of missions. There is a wide range of biblically authorised activities that people may be sent by God to do, including preaching, evangelism, teaching, and healing (Goldsmith 2014:92-93). The living God, Maker of heaven and earth, the eternal Father, sends His people on a Mission into the world. Having redeemed His people by the blood of His Son, having given people His message in the Bible and having equipped people with the Holy Spirit, He sends them out to be His instruments for fulfilling His purpose in history (Köstenberger 1998: Xi). According to Ott, Strauss, and Tennent (2010: xiv), “to send” is a word derived from the Latin word *mitto*, and *missio*, which means “sending.” The Greek New Testament uses two terms to describe sending: *pempo* and *apostello*. These terms are used more or less synonymously to describe God sending angels and prophets, the Father sending the Son, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the sending of the disciples (Köstenberger 1998:97–111).

Indeed, God is a God who sends His representatives, messengers, and eventually, His Son, as agents in the story of salvation. This salvation will ultimately include persons of every group, nation, tribe, and languages. It is God’s initiative, and it is God who receives all the glory. According to the researcher, God initially mainly sends angels and prophets, after which He calls people, known as Israelites, to be sent as witnesses to His righteousness and glory among the nations of the world.

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<sup>10</sup> While the Bible talks of “**sending**”, it also speaks of “**going**.” The two words coexist. This means the sender must have the people to send and those who are sent are the ones termed in this study as the “**going missionaries**” and the people who do the sending are the “**sending missionaries**.” For instance, in John 3:16, God Himself is depicted as a sending missionary. He sent His only begotten Son to come to earth to save His people from sin. His Son Jesus Christ became **a going missionary** by accepting the call. In Luke 10 :1-3 the Bible says “...the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where He was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” In verse 3, Jesus tells the disciples “Go” (“going missionaries”) and then He says to the same disciples “I am sending you”. In this particular instance, Jesus is the sending missionary. Therefore, where the phrase “going missionaries” is mentioned in this study, it refers to the ones who are being sent, and the “sending missionaries” refers to the one doing the sending.

The story continues with the sending of God's Son Jesus Christ to effect salvation for all mankind and defeat the evil on the cross, and then, the sending of new people of God in the power of His Spirit, the Church, to become His instrument and a sign of His Kingdom. The story concludes victoriously with the return of Christ, the ultimate consummation of His Kingdom, the final defeat of evil and the universal confession that Christ is Lord (Ott, Strauss & Tennent 2010: 3). The Old Testament is full of promises and anticipation that people from all nations of the world would one day adore God. According to John Piper's survey of all case variants of the phrase *panta ta ethne* in the plural, which occurs in the Old Greek Testament some 100 times, it virtually never carries the meaning "Gentile individuals" but always carries the meaning "all nations" in the sense of the people groups outside Israel (Winter & Hawthorne 2009: 133-134). This chapter therefore explores the Biblical and theological basis of Mission to the people of other faiths in both the Old and New Testaments.

## **2.1 GEOGRAPHICAL MISSION IN THE BIBLE**

Jesus' word at the very beginning of Acts outlines the geographical structure of the Missional Church. The geographical course of the apostolic witness starts from Jerusalem and spreads to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The first mission of the church took place in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7). Following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), great persecution erupted, and the church scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8). The conversion of Saul (Acts 9) and of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) led to the founding of the church at Antioch (Acts 11), and paved the way for Mission work beyond Israel to the Gentile people. This mission was launched when the Holy Spirit led the church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Paul to take the good news throughout the Roman Empire. After their first trip to Cyprus and Asia Minor (Acts 13-14), the theological foundation amidst the nations was established at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). In the second journey, this time in the company of Silas,

Paul travelled to the provinces beyond Asia Minor before returning to Jerusalem (Acts 16-21). The geographical Mission movement outlined in Acts 1:8 was seen as the progress of the Word of God from Jerusalem to Rome (Goheen 2011:129). This story line of Acts is about the geographical spread of the Word of God. As Rosner (in Marshall & Peterson 1998:221). points out, this was not an abstract theological message; it was a message of power fully incarnated in the life, words, and deeds of the church.

Isaiah 49 provides a clear depiction of the homecoming of exiled Jewish people from all points of the globe (vv. 22-23). They came from all over the world where they had been scattered, to rebuild their ruined city and restore their community (v. 23). At Pentecost, people from all over the Biblical world heard Peter preach the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection with astonishing results. However, as the Christian movement spread, it became clear that it was different from other religions, which have a geographical centre: Jerusalem for the Jews, Mecca for Muslims, Varanasi for Hindus, and Amritsar for Sikhs. Christianity is not a territorial religion (Goheen 2011:129).

Bosch (1993:175) states that in this new era: "If we want the missionary enterprise to be authentic and our reflections on Mission to be relevant, we will have to pay even more serious attention to this branch of Missiology than we used to." Goheen (2014:36) points out that Mission was understood primarily as a geographical movement from the West to the non-West. Although it was difficult to find Old Testament passages to fit this understanding, the New Testament offered more, and yet this practice was seen to isolate missionary texts that fit a geographical expansion understanding. It is clear that the Bible is a narrative record of God's Mission in and through His people for the sake of the world. It tells a story in which Mission is a central thread, God's Mission, Christ's Mission, the Spirit's Mission, and the Church's Mission to the entire world (Bartholomew and Goheen 2014:37).

Willitts (2008:372) says that the geographical scope of the narrative of Mission is perhaps important for the understanding of the identity of “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” In spite of the unquestionable observation of Matthew describing Jews coming from all over the land of Israel to Jesus (Mt 4:23-25), he does not show Jesus as either gathering the Jews or going to them (Lohfink 1983: 274-276; Cousland 2001:63-65; Chae 2004:321-324, 588). Jesus’ sending of His disciples (10:5b-6), which when viewed from the standpoint of the whole Gospel reflects His own calling (cf 15:24). It also suggests the possibility of a limited geographical scope of Jesus’ earthly Mission (Willitts 2008:372).

Davies and Allison argue that the Matthean Jesus is *not* pursuing all Israel in His pursuit of “the lost sheep,” (1991:160-61). According to Matthew, there is a geographical limitation in Jesus and His disciples, with His Messianic activity centering in the northern region of the Land (Gundry 1994:185; LaGrand 1999:139-40). Willitts (2008:372) indicates that a limitation of scope on the part of Jesus’ mission according to Matthew, need not imply that Jesus was *not* interested in the restoration of “all Israel” but, to the contrary, it is likely that His Mission in the north was a sign of the coming restoration of the whole.

Gundry (1994:185) takes the disciples’ geographical prohibition to imply that they were not to go into any region of Gentiles in the north or Samaritans in the south; thus, the Mission was limited to the region of Galilee. LaGrand (1999:137), Overman (1996:148), and Garbe (2005:147) agree with Gundry’s opinion. Gundry, further believes that the basis for this geographical prohibition of Mission is found in the example of Jesus. He writes: “In this way Matthew indicates that their ministry must follow the pattern of Jesus’ ministry, which, He has already taken pains to show, began in Galilee (Matt 4:14-16)” (1994:185; cf. similarly Schnabel 2002:292-93).

This mission work is also restricted geographically by the fact that its focus is on the northern Israelites (Willitts 2008:378). According to the researcher, the disciples were neither

to go beyond the borders of Israel to the Jewish Diaspora in Gentile regions in the north or east, nor were they to conduct their Mission in the region of the Samaritans in the south. Jesus, as the Messianic Shepherd King, was Himself sent and also sent His disciples to the northern elements of the former kingdom of Israel to prepare them for the coming renewal of national Israel reunited under His Davidic leadership (ibid).

Peskett and Ramachandra (2003: 152-153) indicate that as far as the redemption which the Bible speaks of has been experienced by large numbers of people in all categories of different circumstances, consequently Mission fulfilment of the Old Testament expectations has far surpassed the geographical terms in which they were articulated. Isaiah 49:12 mentions the universal ingathering, the vision and hope that "... all flesh shall know that I am the Lord Your Saviour" (v. 26) which has already been fulfilled in ways far beyond what could perhaps have been convincingly anticipated in Old or New Testament periods. This can be evidenced by the fact that the globe has become community Christian believers. In hundreds of nations, the Christian faith has taken root. However, there are still billions of people worldwide who have not had the opportunity to hear the message of salvation or encounter the good news of Jesus Christ. Therefore, because of this, it is necessary for many who will follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who will proclaim and live out the gospel, who will plant and establish evangelising churches and who will hope and pray for the new heaven and earth from God, whose temple is the Lord God, and whose light is the Lamb, who look forward to the time when the nations will walk by its light, and kings of the earth will bring their glory into it (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003: 153)

## **2.2 THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND MISSION**

The Book of Deuteronomy shows that universal sovereignty belongs to God (10:14, 17). These verses depict that heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to God and the earth with all that is in it (v.14). According to the researcher, this is a Hebrew manner of saying



that the entire cosmos, all of realism belongs to God (Craigie 1976:204; Merrill 1994:203). God is not another tribal God. The Living God is not confined within the physical world or even within the cosmic heaven of Near Eastern mythology. He owns the cosmos and he is the ruler of everything therein. Everything that is, is indebted for its existence to God. In verse 14, it is clearly shown that God's universal rule covers the entire planet earth and that all humankind belongs to him, even when they don't obey him, he is still their Creator and they are His creatures. On the other hand, verse 15 speaks of God's specific redemptive love for a particular people. Indeed, if God loves this people, it is because his *agape*, so to say, is on the entire world. Actually, the calling of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) had as its final goal the fulfilment of the promise that 'all people of the earth will be blessed through you'. So, while God is at work in all nations, in no nation other than Israel is he at work for the sake of all nations as Peskett and Ramachandra (2003:110-111) put it. Additionally, from Abraham's story, it is clear that God's concern is for all created human beings. People from every possible human grouping are called into the people of God. Thus, regardless of their faiths, God deserves worship as the One Creator.

There are also three themes that show the expression of God's universal interest towards the people of other faiths and other nations apart from Israel. God is not only interested in Israel. There are several places in the Old Testament where it clearly shows that God leads other nations towards Himself as well. For instance, in Amos 9:7, God speaks through Amos: "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" Indeed, this gives clear evidence that God is also interested in bringing people of other faiths on board through his chosen people.

God sends Jonah to Israel's enemies in Nineveh, and uses Cyrus, the Persian King, to bring them home from exile (see Isa. 45:1). This is also another strong Biblical base of

Mission to people of other faiths. There are some records of non-Israelites coming to faith in the God of Israel. One good example being Rahab in Joshua chapter 2, another is Naaman which is found in 2 Kings 5 and Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2 – 4 and there is a future vision of all nations turning to him for instance see in Isaiah chapter 2:2-3; 19:24-25; 61: 1-3; 66:23; Zach. 2:11; 14:16- 19) (Glaser 2005: 38). Consequently, there are promises, blessings and covenants, which are found in the book of Genesis 1-11, which are given to all of God's creation without any conditions attached to them. Furthermore, the beginning call of God to Abraham is in Genesis chapter 12 when God makes covenant with Israel. Glaser (2005: 43) notes that it is of significance that the covenant made with Abraham not only for the blessing of his descendants, but that through them all the nations should be blessed (Gen. 12:3). This means that by the mention of all nations, the people of other faiths are also included in this covenant promise of blessings.

The Bible depicts God working in the whole of planet earth during the rest of history. Even though most of it is about Israel, God's concern is for all people of the entire world. As Glaser (2005) stresses that is the overall focus of the Bible, and the conclusion that can be drawn is that, whatever Israel was chosen for, God's purpose has always been for the whole of humankind and not only for one specific group of people. The countries surrounding Israel are similar to the people of diverse faiths nowadays. Furthermore, it is clear that in the Old Testament times there were no nations as we know them these days. Rather, there were different groups of people, which were known as ethnic groups, with their rulers, rituals, territories and gods (Glaser 2005: 43). In all these circumstances, Israel was to be a witness to these surrounding peoples; as she was supposed to display to them what God was like, even though she frequently failed. Likewise, it is also true that the early believers of the true God lived among the so mentioned surrounding nations of Israel, and they learned from them and struggled with them; and both were definitely called to be witnesses to all the nations. This is

indeed, a clear indication of the basis for the Christians' relationships with the people of different faiths (Glaser 2005:44).

## **2.3 THREE OLD TESTAMENT BASIC MISSION TEXTS**

In the Old Testament, there are three basic texts that make the missionary mandate clear that God intended for the whole nation of Israel: Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:4-6, and Psalm 67. These texts are specifically selected in this study because they set forth a clear summary of the Mission of God in the entire Old Testament, even though Wright (2006:48) argues in his missional hermeneutics that the Old Testament as a whole is a missionary book. It seems impossible for one to comprehend the Old Testament correctly without investigating the three texts in their missionary setting. In God's strategy and purpose, the children of Israel had been called and chosen to be responsible for proclaiming the message of God's grace to the other nations. Israel was to be an interactive nation; in other words, it was chosen to be God's communicating agent to all nations of the world (Walter, C Kaiser in Winter & Hawthorne 2009: 11). These texts give a concrete mandate for the believers of the Lord, both in the past and the present times. Essentially, these are arranged in a form of outline in which God's word to Old Testament people is a call to the people of this era as well:

- To declare God's strategy of blessing the nations, Genesis 12:3b says:  
    ".... in you shall all families of the earth be blessed."
- To take part in God's ministry as His representative of that blessings thus, Exodus 19:4-6 declares:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. And now if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

- To demonstrate His purpose to bless all the nations of the earth, Psalm 67 says:

...May God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine on us. Selah. So that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples thank You. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You shall judge the peoples righteously and govern the nations on earth. ... Let the peoples give thanks to You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth shall yield its increase; and God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

The God who is revealed in the Bible is personal, purposeful, and goal-oriented. The opening story of creation depicts God working towards a goal, finishing it with fulfillment, resting, and content with the result of His work. Starting from the great promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, it is clear that God is totally, covenantally and eternally dedicated to the Mission of blessing the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham. This makes texts in Genesis crucial for Mission in the Old Testament. It is seen from this argument that the Mission of God could be summarised as "God Blessing His People to Be a Blessing to the Nations" in every generation. The universality of the Mission of God was clearly stated for the first time with regard to Abraham. The Old Testament's Great Commission affirms that: "all people on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). God emphasises these three times to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Abraham was to be a blessing to "all families on earth;" He was called to be a light to the entire world.

Moskala (2008:46) argues that Gen 12:2-3 was God's programmatic statement for Abraham and those who would follow the same faith. This is true in that some religions of the world today trace their faith from Abraham; for instance, Christians and Muslims share this heritage. Kaiser (1995:13) precisely enunciates that this text provides "the formative theology" for "a divine program to glorify Himself by bringing salvation to all on planet earth". In essence, Abraham finally became the special messenger, or missionary to the whole world. This was done with a Mission which would only later be carried out by Israel and then fully fulfilled by God (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3) on an even greater scale, since He would be the salvation for the whole world (Isa 49:6). Moskala (2008:51-52)

argues that Psalm 67 is built on the Aaronic benediction from Num 6:24–26 in which the name of the Lord (*Yahweh*) articulating the notion of a personal God of His covenant people, is changed to God (*Elohim*) to emphasise the worldwide call of God to all nations to praise Him. Indeed, the three above mentioned texts of the Old Testament set the basis of the Mission of God to the entire world.

## **2.4 GOD’S PURPOSE FOR MISSIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Kaiser (2000:37) indicates that even though the radical centripetal method identifies certain universality in the Old Testament which is regarded as a base for the New Testament call to evangelise, the situation presented is more than an ordinary foundational basis in the Old Testament evangel and its call for Israel’s involvement. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee (2004 :31-37) argue that Israel’s culture and worship revolved around the temple, which is a centripetal strategy; however, the message was to be spread to the nations, and that is a centrifugal strategy. In history, God’s undertaking through Israel in the Old Testament is defined as centripetal while God’s undertaking through the Church in the New Testament is defined as centrifugal. These two terms are used to describe the nature of missional undertakings in the Bible. According to Webster, "centripetal" is defined as, “proceeding or acting in a direction towards a centre or axis” (Merriam-Webster “Centripetal”). Centrifugal is defined as “proceeding or acting in a direction away from a centre or axis” (Merriam-Webster.com “Centrifugal”).

In Biblical Mission, Peters (1984:21) mentions that the term "centripetal" is used to explain the “come at this point” mindset of Old Testament undertaking while "centrifugal" is used to explain the “go towards” mindset of New Testament undertaking. Peters goes on to state: “with regard to methodology, the Scriptures prescribe a twofold way – the *centrifugal* and the *centripetal*. It must be recognised that the Old Testament is wholly built around the latter method, whereas the New Testament enjoins the former method” (Ibid).

In the book of Psalms, repeatedly the Psalmists called on all the peoples of the lands and nations to praise the Lord (Ps. 47:1; 67:3, 5; 100:1; 117:1). It was even more direct that the ancient singers of Israel were able to go on to urge their people to tell, proclaim, and make known the mighty deeds of God (Ps. 9:11; 105:1) and to join in singing praises to God from all the nations (Ps. 18:49; 96:2-3). Indeed, the Psalmists went further to offer themselves to sing God's praises among the nations (Ps. 57:9; 108:3). The expected result would be that all the ends of the earth would turn to the Lord and all the families on earth would bow down in God's worship (Ps. 22:27; 66:4; 86:9). Definitely, this was the reason why King Solomon in his dedicatory prayer of the temple pronounced God's blessing on the people of the earth that they might know that Yahweh is God alone (I Kings 8:43-60).

Jonah serves as an example of refuting the alleged case for a centripetal only emphasis in the Old Testament. God commanded Jonah to go and preach in the capital city of Assyria, Nineveh. This mission, although carried out under substantial pressure and narrow nationalism, was clearly blessed by God. It is a fact that Jonah was upset that the grace of God should have been extended to such ruthless and hostile enemies who had caused so much turmoil on Jonah's own native country. However, the truth remains that Jonah is portrayed as an excellent example of cross-cultural missions and the book emphasises the contrast between Jonah's anger and God's delight in reaching the Gentiles. Peskett and Ramachandra (2003:133) further argue that Jonah's reported message to the people of Nineveh was not expressed in covenantal terms. There is no detailed knowledge of what Jonah said to the people of Nineveh, other than pronouncing a warning message that the city was about to be turned upside down (Olson 2003:32-33). However, when they repented with such surprising thoroughness, the question was how much knowledge of the true God informed of their repentance? In this story, Jonah makes careful orthodox confessions about the nature of God. Somehow, it seems that the sailors were filled with fear, despite their

generosity to Jonah and their quick response to prayers that they may not have been guilty of shedding innocent blood. Correspondingly, the unexpected citywide repentance in Nineveh, the world's capital of evil as one may think and say, appears to agree favourably with the hard heartedness of Jonah, the prophet of the true God.

The people of Nineveh were urged to receive Jonah and His Mission as a vessel by which knowledge and understanding for those outside the light of Christianity who may be looking for God in their own manner, under the awning of their own culture and religion could be reviewed (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003:133-134). Therefore, God sent messengers with his word just as the Psalmists intended. Subsequently, it is true that the gospel always comes from outside not from within. This is the reason why it was hard to urge Gentiles to praise and worship God if they had never been told about Him in person. Actually, this is something, which was already operative in the days of the Psalmists in Israel. This could as well be learned from the associated reasons that seem to be putting sanctions to all the nations to know the Lord and to serve him. This is a clear indication that Mission cannot be second thought for the Old Testament since it is the heart and core of God's original plan (Kaiser 2000:38).

#### **2.4.1 God's promise and purpose on a global scope (Genesis 1-11)**

The scope of Genesis 1-11 is worldwide in its bid for the salvation of all the people who would believe regardless of whether they were Jewish or Gentiles. In other words, from the look of these chapters, it is clear that the Old Testament did not start in an ethnocentric manner; but its scope was based on a universal form of outreach. The theme in these same chapters is the nation's seeking for a name for themselves and to improve their reputation at

the cost of the name of Lord God. Therefore, the “sons of God”<sup>11</sup> took the divine title for themselves along with its privileges and rights. They slanted the means that God set up for justice, mistreating it for their own desires and lust. This led to the great flood, the second failure of the pre-patriarchal period of Genesis 1-11. This situation was preceded by the fall of man in Genesis the third chapter and then followed by the letdown of the Tower of Babel as in Genesis 11. Therefore, after the participants of the construction of this Tower of Babel were failed by God by confusing and making them speak different languages, they were scattered all over the world. All this happened because of their sin of selfishness in trying to make a name for themselves, which was not in line with the will of God. Therefore, God had to find a way of bringing them back to Himself. In other words, they became people of other faiths, hence needing to come back to God through the worldwide Mission of God.

In Genesis 12:1-3, despite each of the three failures of humanity, God’s plan of salvation had to be proclaimed. God had a saving word of grace for them (Gen. 3:15, 9:27, and 12:1-3). In these texts, God’s third gracious word showed that was relevant at this point because it stressed God’s grace over and against the failures of mankind and their idolatrous seeking for a “name” or reputation. God repeated three times by saying “I will bless you” “I will bless those who bless you” and “In Your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Significantly, it is clear that the essential word in these passages of Scripture is “bless”. The similar word that had categorised the entire section, starting with the word to Adam and Eve were in this form: “He blessed by saying, ‘be fruitful and multiply,’” just as God had also cordially vowed to bless the animals as well. In spite of the many promises of blessings, human beings continued to search for meaning on their own terms seeking for a “name.” Within the bareness of this pursuit, this emptiness of looking for social status, name and accomplishment

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<sup>11</sup> The sons of God here refers most likely to the righteous and God-fearing descendants of Seth (Gen 6:2), Elsewhere in the Bible, the righteous are described as the “sons of God” (see Deut. 14:1; Isa. 43:6; and Mal. 2:10).



apart from God, Genesis 12:2 unexpectedly declares that God gave Abraham a “name” as a blessing from heaven rather than as a consequence of his own godless motivation.

#### **2.4.2 Mission for human beings**

The introduction of the people of the world is found in the book of Genesis chapters 1-11. These chapters provide a description of God creating humanity, their eviction from the Garden of Eden and the rise of wickedness among human beings, which resulted in the judgement of the deluge. This is the kind of world in which humankind lives; its inhabitants are still wicked, nevertheless, God is unconditionally dedicated (Gen 8:21-22) to it and He promises blessing and necessitates justice (9:1-7). The covenant in Genesis 9:8-17, is paramount about this world, since it includes all people. In other words, it comprises all living beings of the earth (vv. 12, 16) and the earth itself (v. 13). Thus, to say there is no exemption at all. Hence, Glaser (2005:55) penned, “the first thing the Bible teaches us about people of other faiths is that they are human beings, in God’s land and under God’s rainbow, just like us.” This implies that people who have known and are worshipping the true living God, should share the love and the blessing with these people of other faiths who worship the unknown gods of this world.

Genesis 1-11 provides a clear picture of the planet earth which is the human’s living place and into which Abraham was blessed by God to be a blessing. It further gives information that all human beings were made in God’s image and are fallen and that the dissimilarities in human beings can be both part of God’s providence and the consequence of sin. These central facts will set the grounds of all Biblical writings in Genesis 12 and Revelations 22 (Glaser 2005:56).

Additionally, in the same Genesis 1-11, there is a lot that could be learned about human religion. Human beings require a way that leads to God. The first chapter of Genesis verse 3 gives a clear picture that human beings were initially in a strong relationship with

God and creation, and when sin entered the world it separated them from his presence. Thus, humanity evidently needs a way back to their Creator, however, the way they return may not be the same as the way they left. Furthermore, Genesis 1-11 continues to provide another picture of how humans can relate to God. This is not through humankind's own effort that he should try to come to God, rather, that God the Creator who is different from his creatures chooses to descend and reach out to humanity. This can be seen in Genesis 3:8, as God walks in the Garden of Eden seeking man after his fall. According to the researcher, what is required of human beings is a positive response by walking with God.

#### **2.4.2.1 God calls a family for His Mission, Genesis 12 -50**

Consequently, whereas Genesis 1-11 gives a clear picture about the world of nations, on the other hand, Genesis 12-50 provides a picture about God's Mission to the fallen world. This is seen as God calls a family, he commands Abraham to leave his home country and his people to go to a new land. Genesis 12:2-3 says, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make Your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Abraham was called to be among the nations, and the people that were to be blessed through him were religious. Similarly, Abraham was brought up among the Mesopotamian religions, and as well, Abraham and his family lived in Canaan and Egypt where there were all kinds of religions. Evidently, in Abraham it can be seen that God called him out of a religious family and initiating His Mission to the world of many religions, which is no different from today's world. Indeed, God's plan for blessing the nations was not only for some specific individual and family but all the people in the land (Gen. 12:1-3). This particular chapter of Genesis unfolds as to how God established the family into his exceptional nation among nations that adored other gods (Glaser 2005: 78).

According to the researcher, Abraham's promise from God was in effect made to be to the world. In Genesis 12:1-2, God affirmed that He would not only bless Abram, the name he used before it was changed to Abraham. The following verse unfolds the astonishing magnitude of that blessing, thus: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." It is surprising that it was possible that one man would become a blessing to all the families throughout the entire world. Although Abram listened to and obeyed God, it is unlikely that he grasped the worldwide implications immediately. The whole promise, as Abraham heard it recurrently in years to come, had three sections which were land, family, and blessing. The first two sections about land and family possibly made sense logically and immediately at that time. However, what possibly remained an unknown was the promise that in some way through his household, the coming of blessing would be upon every nation on planet earth. Consequently, the nations are not forgotten at any given point; they are protuberant in Abraham's call by God. God chose Abraham out of an idolatrous people as his true representative of the nations (Josh. 24:2). Abraham's call was such that the nations could be called to faith and repentance, to know and obey the God of Israel as one and true God (Hedlund 1991: 35).

Whereas years passed on without Abraham receiving the land and son, he must have considered what the satisfaction of the promise of God would look like since it took some time. As God's people, we would as well think and consider it as well in the implementation of the Great Commission, which is in line with God's command for those who have believed and to those who will believe in him. The promise to Abraham was that "all nations will be blessed" which is still being fulfilled in this generation. Furthermore, in Genesis there are clear references on how the promise of blessing was fulfilled in a noticeable manner. According to the researcher, when Abraham's life was almost coming towards the end, God blessed him in every way (24:1). Actually, there are three comprehensive types of blessings

in the book Genesis that Abraham received: First, he was blessed in material wealth and fruitfulness (24:35, 30:27, 30). Secondly, he was blessed with a favoured relationship with God and the experience of His presence (14:19-20, 1:22, 26:22), and thirdly, he was blessed with bringing about peace amidst families and peoples (21:22-23; 26:18-29). Hence, all this embraces a worldwide blessing, to all people of God indiscriminately.

#### **2.4.2.2 Mission beyond Abraham's Family**

God's blessing did not end with Abraham and his family. The nations were blessed as well as explained in Genesis stories about Abraham and his family even though Abraham lied to foreign multitudes which produced destructive results (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18), including Jacob's sons wiping out the Canaanite men in the city (Gen.33:18 to 34:31). Notwithstanding all these and other events, God did come to the aid of other nations through Abraham and his descendants. For instance, Sodom and Gomorrah cities came to be rescued by Abraham (Gen.14), which had already been taken into captivity by raiding armies that had detained "all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply" (14:11). It did not take long after Abraham prayed for God to spare the whole city of Sodom. The prophet was able to argue his case out before the Living God, not just for his brother Lot and his family, but for the entire city even though the city had been destroyed. The fact is that Abraham initiated intercession for the whole city to be saved. In Genesis 47:7-10, it very important to note that Abraham's grandson Jacob pronounced a blessing on Pharaoh.

Moreover, at the climax of Genesis, is the story of Joseph the Son of Jacob. Similar to Abraham and Isaac before him, the unbelievable efficiency of Joseph's work was able to cause the foreigners present to conclude that God's presence with Joseph had resulted in astonishing abundance. This by itself is evidence of Mission to the people of other faiths, with the Egyptians recognising the God of Joseph. "The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered and lived in the house of his Egyptian master" (Gen. 39:2). Further, Joseph's

master as well recognised that “the Lord’s blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field because of Joseph” (39:5). Joseph indeed, was God’s missionary in Egypt.

### **2.4.3 Basis of Mission in the book of Exodus 19:4-6**

According to Kaiser (2000), the selection of the nation of Israel, far from other nations of the world, was the very means of salvation of the nations. It is clear that such selection was not a call to privilege, but a choice to serve God. In other words, the people were to be God’s co-workers, His mouthpiece when preaching His word, His prophets to their own nation and other nations (Kaiser, 2000: 22). In the light that is given by the grace of God with regard to this, the Bible text says “if you will obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6). Thus, this is to say that Israel’s role was a mediatory one, as they related to the nations and people groups around them. Israel as a nation was to be set apart in their service for God (Kaiser 2000: 23).

In other words, through the nation of Israel, all families of the earth were to obtain the blessing God had in store for all who believed and will believe. Nevertheless, Israel as a nation missed the reward of her high calling, behaved badly, and became self-centred as a nation. She also acted selfishly and lost the essence of her calling. The Israelites indeed did not carry a portfolio of the coming Man of promise and the seed through which all the world would be blessed. This great nation Israel, was rejected, for the most part of her high calling as a conduit through which the grace of God was intended to spread to all nations of the world failed. In a real sense, since Israel failed the mission of her calling, other people outside Israel thus, the people other nations (the Gentiles) were to share in this cheerful Mission of ministering to all the people on earth; all who believed during the Old Testament era, regardless of religion, Jewish or not, all who believed were just as considerably part of Abraham’s “seed” (Gal.3:29).

In Moses' teaching, he clearly taught that "do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens living in Egypt" (Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:33). Consequently, it is not unusual to think that the Lord was concurrently extending the offer of salvation to others during the Old Testament times in addition to Israel. Solomon also for the same reason, during his dedicatory prayer for the temple, prayed that:

Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays towards this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name. (1Kings 8:41-43 NIV)

Moreover because of God's nature, power, and saving qualities of his name, it was expected that foreigners and Gentiles would come to worship the Living God. It was also anticipated that God would hear and answer their prayers just as effectively as he would answer the prayers of Israelites. Certainly, God is the Lord over all the nations of the earth. This is the reason the Psalmist invites all the nations of all the earth to join in the worshipping of the one and only God of the universe (Psalm 22:27). It was clear from the beginning that the fundamental symbol of the "seed" of God who was to come in the person of the Man of promise, was Christ the Messiah. This message was aimed to spread worldwide to all people groups and nations.

Wright (2005:22) states that by examining this text from the Exodus narrative, the sub-theme of God's redeeming love for Egypt is not seen as the main purpose of the Exodus account, but God's universal love, even to the Egyptians in the midst of the plagues. This has an important bearing on the inquiry of mission in the Old Testament. It was the affirmation that God, who had chosen Israel, was also the Creator, Owner, and Lord of the whole world since the chosen Israel was in relation to God's purpose for the entire world, not just for Israel (Deut 10:14ff. cf. Ex 19:4-6). It is explicit that the election of Israel was not equal to a

rejection of the nations, but clearly for their final advantage. Actually, Wright (2005:12) argues that the later covenantal obedience was not only based on Israel's historical redemption out of Egypt, but also linked to their identity and role as a priestly and holy people in the midst of the nations as seen in Exodus 19:4-6.

Kleinig (1987) says that in Exodus 19:4, God summarises what He has done for Israel as depicted in chapters 1-18 and then in 19:5-6 God foreshadows what was about to happen. In verse 5, God states the purpose of chapters 20-24, and in verse 6, He states the purpose of chapters 25-40. Thus, the Chosen People are the basis of Mission, and this clarifies the theological structure of Exodus (1987:15). He further argues that before God put His proposal to the people, He reminded them in 19:4 of what He had done for them while in bondage. According to the researcher, these people themselves had experienced how God had defeated the Egyptians and miraculously delivered the Israelites from their power (1987:25). Therefore, the texts that are selected from Exodus are in a position of setting the basis of Mission when Christians want to reach out to the people of other faiths worldwide.

#### **2.4.4 Moses' encounter with Pharaoh as basis of Mission**

Moses' encounter with Pharaoh by its nature has in particular an evangelistic drive to it. In examining the remarkable events of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, everything that happened focused on the people of Egypt to turn from their wicked ways, respond to the will of God, and set free the children of Israel in response to God's demand. Virtually 18 times in the Bible the reason that is provided for the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea is not merely that they were to eliminate the Egyptians or the King, but so that "the Egyptians would know that I am the Lord" (Exod. 7:5, 17; 8:22; 14:4, 18). Moreover, it is even more clearly indicated in Exodus 9:14, 16 that God would proclaim His own name among the people of other nations besides the Israelites, and this would happen even if the Israelites were not obedient in their witnessing of God.

In Exodus 12:38, it is explicit that when the children of Israel left Egypt, they went out with “a mixed multitude” or a group of “many people” and definitely these people did not belong to the faith of the Israelites. This would appear to suggest that many of these Egyptians were more than merely impressed with what they saw and heard. They were some of the first fruits of the work of God among them. Since the Bible provides the background of the Egyptian religion with all of its gods represented through the very elements that were smashed out by the plagues, it is reasonable to conclude that the plagues declared God’s victory over the power of the false religion of the people of Egypt. The fact Moses wanted to get across to Pharaoh and his people through the plagues was that they might understand and “know that all the earth is the Lord’s” (Exod. 9:29). The idols of Egypt, as in every other nation, cult, or religion, were no equal to the one and the only living God (Kaiser 2000: 21-22). Furthermore, as Exodus put it, many of “those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field” during the plague of hail (9:20-21). To “fear the word of the Lord” was to believe in Him and to act on the basis of what He said. Consequently, salvation came to the Gentiles because of their response of obedience to the Word of God (v. 22).

In Exodus 3:8, the Lord declares "I have come down to deliver" the Israelites out of Egypt. Now that God revealed His presence to Moses, He instructed Moses to return to Egypt in order to bring out His people. ‘But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’ (Ex 3:11). God’s answer was "but I will be with you" means, as Durham (1982:33) puts it, "Who Moses was, was not the question; it was rather, who was with Moses?." Moses would have known that the Mission was not of his own free will but God’s. The promise of God’s presence was the guarantee that no matter how insufficient Moses was for the task, he would be successful, for it is God Himself who



"comes down to deliver" the people through Moses. Here God's presence was seen as an assurance completion of the Mission that He Himself appointed and initiated (Thomson 2012:72). Like Moses, Christians whom God had called to take His Gospel to the unreached people groups of other faiths often behave the same way, forgetting that the work is God's, not theirs.

God commanded Moses three times, to go and face Pharaoh and deliver the children of Israel. In Moses' third objection, he states that the Israelites would not believe that the Lord appeared to him. The Lord answered by giving Moses three signs in order "that the Israelites could believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers...has appeared to you" (Moses) (Ex 4:5). Childs (1962:112) and Durham (1982:28) comment that the signs given to Moses were to authenticate him in his task as a prophet of God; although the given signs in themselves were not what authenticated Moses, but God Himself. The signs proved that the Lord indeed had appeared to Moses, which was the factual authentication of Moses' Mission. The signs given to Moses were proof of the self-revelation of God's presence (Thomson 2012:73). God's presence led to the calling of individuals to carry out missions on His behalf (Ex 3:7-10). Similarly, His abiding presence was the assurance that the Mission given to Moses would be successfully completed because it is this God who is present, who is the same God that created man and who was to empower Moses in the task of delivering the Israelites from Egypt (Exod. 4:11-12).

Moses was reluctant to obey God's call. He protested that the people would not believe him if he told them "the God of Your fathers has sent me." Moses argued that the Israelites would want to know God's name. God answered Moses, giving His name by saying, "I Am Who I Am" (Gottlieb 1999:126, Ex 3:14). God at this time performed another miracle and elevated Moses to "be as God" before Pharaoh and appointed Aaron as his prophet (Ex 7:1). Moses went to Pharaoh and demanded the freedom of the Jews only to find

Pharaoh was angry, he responded by giving the Jews harsher work. Such deferrals and delays in prophecies are usual. Nevertheless, Moses grumbled to God about the lack of immediate implementation (Ex. 5:22-23). Hendel (2011:234-235) interprets God's response to Moses in Exodus 6:1-3 as stressing that experienced prophets expect implementation to be long term. He further indicates that the prophecies of the patriarchs were not realised in their lifetime. The prophecy to Abraham to be given the land of Israelites is included here (Gen. 17:1-8) as is the prophecy to Jacob to be made fruitful and a great nation (Gen. 35:11). The call of Moses by God to be His agent in leading Israelites to freedom (Ex 3:7-8) is of great importance, as it sets a solid basis for Mission today, as God's servants endeavour to reach out to the people of other faiths of the world. God called Moses by saying “come, therefore,” and the Lord commanded, “I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt” (Neufeld 1993:54; Ex 3:10).

Cohen (2008:29-30) states that God did not send Moses to Egypt without cause; as his role was to fulfill the promises God made to the patriarchs: “I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... I am the Lord” (Ex 6:8). The covenant with the earlier generations was to be fulfilled at that age. This is the setting for Moses’ whole Mission; His guidance is an extension of God’s promise to those who came before Moses. The Christian communities are as well called like Moses to go and share their faith with people of other religions who are in the bondage of sin like the Israelites were in the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt.

#### **2.4.5 Basis of Mission in the book of Deuteronomy**

Moses wrote that God chose a people that should stand as one people before one God in the land. These people were commanded to do everything in their power to maintain justice and right relationships, and to guard equality and equity so that the relationships for which they had been set apart could be enjoyed in all fullness among the nations. Thus,

because of the light of his redemption, they could not treat one another in a way which was incompatible with the way he had treated them. Now that they had become an exodus people, a people of journey, they were destined to keep moving forward with God, their redeemer (Deut. 7).

Peskett and Ramachandra (2003: 123) explain that Mission is not primarily about going, nor Mission about doing anything, but Mission is about being. It is about being a unique kind of persons, a countercultural, multinational community among the nations. It shows before a disbelieving world what the living God of the Bible truly is like. In the actual sense, Mission is about putting the believers' lives on the hurtful brink where the Lord God is at work. Indeed, in Deuteronomy, "God is in the business of challenging the false gods of culture, religion and marketplace, as God is seeking justice for the widow, the orphan and the alien; and He is at work freeing humanity, providing them with new identities that exceed those of class, tribe and nation."

#### **2.4.6 The Worldwide Mission of the Lord (in the book of Isaiah)**

Isaiah 45 falls into two sections. In verses 14-19 God addresses Israel regarding the surprising arrival of aliens, which was to follow the reconstruction of Jerusalem. In verses 20-25 there is a direct demand to the 'end of the earth' for people to turn from their idols to the living and real God. In these same verses, God addresses the worldwide nations directly and specifically the runaways who have fled from idolatry and He commands them to worship the true God of the Bible.

In the same book, in various chapters, Isaiah mentions the promised word of 'light to the Gentiles.' The expression "the light for the Gentiles" occurs twice, Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, and is significant in the Old Testament as God's design for Mission to the nations. Further, this light for the Gentiles is also allotted as a specific Mission for the servant. For it is understood from these texts that salvation was to come to the Gentiles through the

intercession of God's Servant Messiah and Israel. The promise given by the Lord of the Holy Spirit and his plan in Acts 1:8 that early church Christian believers were to be his witness in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth is a fulfillment of the Isaiah mandate. The Lord provided the meaning of what his intention was for the hearers of prophet Isaiah's time to comprehend from the text of Isaiah 49:6.

There are three clear fulfillments of these texts in the New Testament from Isaiah: (1) The phrase "to the ends of the earth" is orally the same as the Greek translation of the identical expression in Isaiah 49:6. In other words, the magnitude and scope of the witness are similar in both the Old and New Testaments. (2) The promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8 is close to the way the wording of Isaiah 32:15, where the prophet predicted the destruction of Jerusalem "till the Spirit poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field." This is evocative of the Spirit's coming in Isaiah 44:3-4 as rain comes on a dry and thirsty land. God's people, Israel, just as the early Christian church believers, would kindle valiant testimony through the work of the Holy Spirit. (3) Israel is being summoned by the Lord to be his witness. This is essential in that context; the Lord's summon is given in the setting of God's lawsuit against the idols that the pagans served (Isa. 41:1-4; 43:8-12; 44:8). These idols or gods were challenged to present their situation but their witnesses were blind (Isa. 44:9, 18-20), without life and unable to respond to calls for liberation. However, contrary to these witnesses, the Lord ordered Israel to be his witness, for they had experienced the Lord's miraculous redemption in their past (Isa. 43:10, 12). The reality is that the Lord's servant messenger, Israel is also blind, not because Israel trusted in idols in the same way the Gentiles did, but because they did not put their trust in God to do all that he had promised them (Isa. 42:18-19). Nevertheless, God promised to heal Israel's blind eyes and "make them a covenant for the people and the light for the Gentiles" (Isa. 49:6).

Indeed, Isaiah the prophet called his nation Israel to actively function as a missionary to the Gentiles and other nations at large. Israel's call to be an active missionary is remarkably strong in both songs of Isaiah 42 and 49. The Prophet Isaiah called his nation to function actively as a missionary to the Gentiles and all the nations at large. The case for an active missionary call to Israel is exceedingly strong in the two Servant songs of Isaiah 42 and 49. The Lord's command for witnessing at that point was not restricted to the Messiah as Servant, but it also involved the remnants of Israel. According to prophet Isaiah, this witness was to go as far as "to the ends of the earth." Israel was to carry out a witnessing Mission after receiving power from the Holy Spirit, which comes to them like rain on a dry and thirsty land. Therefore, Israel was mandated to witness on behalf of God, just as the pagans were doing with their idols, speaking to them as if indeed they were deities. Furthermore, Israel speaking up as God's messenger was made to reach out to summon the Gentiles until all humankind had had the opportunity to recognise that the Lord was the only liberator and Saviour of all humanity. Indeed, God is the Holy One of Israel and of the nations; he is the Creator and ruler of time and space (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003: 141).

#### **2.4.7 Prophets' Mission: The eschatological hope for the nations**

In the Prophets, God's plan of salvation for the nations is furthermore revealed. Isaiah the prophet's word specifically concerns God's relationship to the nations. Isaiah's vital concern is the future of Zion. The people of the nation of Israel, even though they were judged, will again be restored to their role. Through a true Servant of God, salvation is provided to the whole world. In other words, the rule of the Lord will be evident over all nations, and eventually the nations will know God and come to Zion to adore him. This same Isaiah book ends up with one of the noteworthy declarations concerning the Gentile people of other faith nations in the entire Old Testament. The second chapter of Isaiah reveals one of

his important themes in an eschatological link of the nations coming to Zion to adore and learn from God:

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3)

The fact is that God will judge the nations, they will be accountable before him for their rejection of the truth with regard to the worshipping of the true God of heaven. All other gods of other nations are false gods and idols. However, the nations will be drawn to the glorified and exalted Lord in Zion. According to prophet Isaiah, the Lord will establish his Kingdom of peace among them:

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up the sword against other nations, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isa. 2:4)

This theme reappears throughout the book of Isaiah (e.g, 14:26; 19:23-25; 24:13-16; 34:1-2), the prophet similarly predicts the day when the nation of Israel will experience the salvation of the Lord and make this known to other nations of the world:

With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation. At that time, you will say, "Praise the Lord. Call on his name. Make his deeds known among the nations. Make them remember that his name is highly honoured. Make music to praise the Lord. He has done wonderful things. Let this be known throughout the earth. (Isa. 12:3-5 [GW])

In chapter 11 of Isaiah, he shows that the Messiah will fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord (v. 9), and the nations will rally to him (v. 10). It further indicates that one day Egypt and Assyria will be drawn to the Lord and encompassed with Israel in God's blessing as God's own people: "In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handwork, and Israel my inheritance'" (19:24-25). Christopher J. H. Wright as well points out on the same point that, "The identity of Israel will be merged

with that of Egypt and Assyria, such that the Abrahamic promise is not only fulfilled in them but through them” (2006: 236). Subsequently, the teaching of Isaiah concerning the Servant of the Lord provides a new perspective in the development of disclosure. On the other hand, Israel as a nation is known as the Servant as explained in chapter 42, God says through the prophet that:

Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of Your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness, (vv. 1, 6-7).

This passage pictures the Servant as the one chosen by the Lord to be his Spirit-filled messenger and to bring justice, light, and deliverance to the nations of the earth. At this new thing, the Lord’s declaration that (v. 9) the nations are to rejoice in worship of the Lord: “sing to the Lord new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them” (v. 10). Unlike few verses of the same chapter 42, where the God queries the Mission of Israel through the prophet: “Who is blind but my Servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the Servant of the Lord?” (42:19). Israel as the Servant of the Lord evidently failed to live up to its calling as the Servant of the Lord. In chapter 43, he shows that the Servant is to be a witness to the nations:

All the nations gather and the peoples assemble. Which of them foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things? Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, “It is true.” You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, ‘and my Servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no God was formed. Nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no Saviour.” (vv. 9-11)

Although Isaiah chapter 43 shows the failure of Israel again, God remains faithful to his promises of the coming of the true Servant. In chapter 49, the explanation of the Servant changes to explain the ideal Servant who will reestablish Israel. Nevertheless, the restoration

of Israel is not adequately a great task as far the Servant is concerned. The Servant is to be the light to the Gentile nations making God's salvation known to all. He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my Servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of the Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (49:6). Indeed, it was only through this true Servant of the Lord that at last salvation was to be made known to all the nations of the world. The New Testament gives its application of 'The Light for the Gentiles' directly to Jesus Christ (Luke 2:32; cf. John 8:12; 9:5) and the church as in (Acts 13:47; cf. Matt. 5:14). Then verse 7 of Isaiah 49 says that the redeemer will receive the worship of kings and rulers. This salvation was made possible through the sacrificial death of the righteous Servant, Christ Jesus (Isa. 53:10-12). Köstenberger and O'Brien (2001:46) add that concerning the Servant in the book of Isaiah that "this sequence of his ministry, namely, first to Israel that then results in blessing to the nations, suggests not only a pattern similar to the Abrahamic promises but also a partial fulfillment of them (Isa. 49:6)." In chapter 56, Isaiah states the vision of foreigners, other people outside Israel joining them to the Lord, adoring and serving the Lord in the temple, ministering to and loving the Lord. These people profoundly gathered to the Lord's holy mountain, Zion:

Let no foreigner who has bound Himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely exclude me from his people." (V3). "And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-- these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Sovereign Lord declares-- he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will still gather others to them besides those already gathered. (Vv. 6-8).

Thereafter, Isaiah recommences the message of the eschatological enclosure of the nations in extraordinary glory. In chapter 60, Isaiah further writes: "Arise, shine, for Your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the people, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.



Nations will come to Your light, and kings to the brightness of Your dawn.” (vv.1-3). This is a clear indication that people of other faiths are a part of the chosen Israel who will come to know God through God’s chosen people, ready to do Mission to these people who have no knowledge of the true God of heaven.

Additionally, Isaiah’s vision climaxes with chapter 66, the final chapter of his book. This chapter vividly shows that God’s Mission must be fulfilled to all nations. The Lord will finally gather his together; those who have not known him will come to know him as the Lord of glory. The Lord spoke through Isaiah that:

and I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory.” I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations--to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. And they will bring all Your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord--on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the Lord. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the Lord in ceremonially clean vessels. (vv. 18-20).

In this passage, no nation or language group of people is left out. The Gentiles came to the knowledge of God and became missionaries. The Lord sent them to declare his glory to the furthestmost places where he had not been known. Possibly, the most notable in this prophecy of Isaiah is that Gentiles will become the messengers of God to proclaim his glory to the nations, a point which suggests that they also came into a full position of inclusion, with all privileges and access to God. It has been suggested that Isaiah 66:19 influenced Paul’s missionary travel itinerary (Schnabel 2008: 295-97).

Moreover, Jonah is also one book of the Old Testament which should be considered a great missionary book. However, several Old Testament prophets were given messages, commonly of judgement to present to the nations. Jonah is the only example where a prophet has been clearly sent geographically to a Gentile nation as God’s messenger. Jonah’s destination, Nineveh, is one of the capital cities of the Assyrian Empire, the most feared

enemy of Israel. In this incident, the message of Jonah is similarly one of judgement. Nevertheless, afterwards the unwilling prophet had conveyed his message; the whole city of Nineveh comes into repentance and begins to call upon the name of the Lord, God for compassion (3:1-9). God concedes and holds back destruction, proving that he is a God of mercy even to the cruellest nations (3:10). This shows that His covenant of love (in Heb. *hesed*) encompasses the Gentiles (4:2).

Prophet Zechariah likewise addressed Israel's relation to the nations in chapter 8 with a message of hope. Abraham's promise is repeated in verse 13 as follows, "as you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, will I save you and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong." The Lord's redeeming grace is compared to human beings' weaknesses of Israel in recognising the covenant. Verses 20-23 envision the day of its fulfillment when humanity from all nations will come to Israel to adore God:

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him." This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.' (Vv. 20-23)

In chapter 9, the prophet goes further to describe the messianic kingdom, which will extend worldwide peace and righteousness to all nations. At first, the Messianic King brought salvation in humility, as he came on a donkey, and yet was depicted as establishing a kingdom of peace over all the planet earth. Thereafter, Zechariah portrayed the escalation of nations against Jerusalem. However, with the coming of the Messianic King, the defiant nations were all defeated. "The Lord will be King over the whole earth. "On that day there will be one Lord and his name the only name" (Zechariah 14:9b). The nations will bring their prosperity to Jerusalem. "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem

will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah:16). But those refusing to do so, will be punished by the Lord (14:17-19).

On the other hand, Zechariah’s vision was repeated in other minor prophets. For instance, the Lord expressed through Malachi, “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,’ says he Lord Almighty” (1:11). The prophet Micah also foretells the worship of many nations of the universe in Zion (4:2), a reign of peace (4:3), the one born in Bethlehem whose “greatness will reach to the ends of the earth” (5:4), and the judgement of disobedient nations (5:15). Consequently, through the Messiah the kingdom of God will be established over all nations, including the worship of all nations, covering all over the earth. In this manner, God’s plan for the nations and his Kingdom purposes unite and come to eventual fulfillment. A forthcoming inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God, gathering together to worship God in Zion, is according to the researcher a recurring theme in the Old Testament. All people of the earth will one day receive the blessing of the Lord.

It is debated whether Israel had a missionary mandate from the Lord to go to the nations (Kaiser 2000: 45), or if Israel’s missionary calling was to be a more inactive witness of God’s righteousness and glory in the midst of the nations, attracting the nations to come and worship God (Köstenberger & O’Brien 2001; Schnabel 2004; C. J. H. Wright 2006). Some Bible passages could be interpreted as indicating that Israel was commanded to go to the nations. For instance, several Psalms call Israel to “declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples” (Ps. 96:3; see also, e.g. 9:11b and 105:1b). These kinds of passages could, nevertheless, be comprehended poetically, or this could imply that the manner in which Israel communicates may be more of an attraction and setting an

example rather than of explicitly giving a sermon among the nations of the universe. In this case, Israel's mandate in its Mission was to serve the Lord faithfully as his promise to people among the nations. Therefore, in such an undertaking, they were to become God's instrument of revealing God's kingdom and righteousness to the people of other nations.

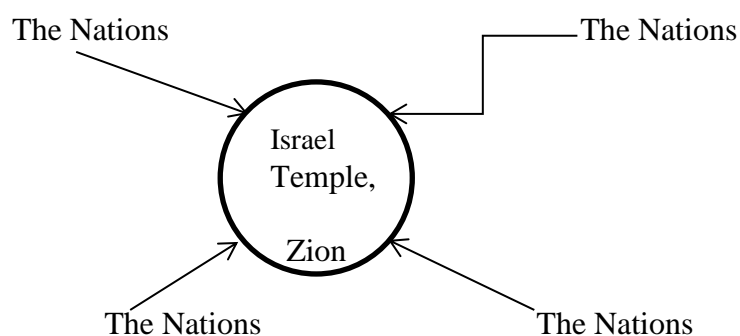
Additionally, the Old Testament consistently portrays that the worship of the Lord was centralised in Zion. The people of the nations were called to abandon idols, submit to God's reign, and come to worship him. Isaiah speaks of the word of the Lord going out from Jerusalem; however, the outcome will be nations coming to Zion (Isa. 2:3; 12:4-5; cf. Mic. 4:2). This gathering together of the nations in a central place, Zion, is generally placed in the distant, if not eschatological, future. Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations yet again the mode is not categorical (Isa. 42:6). Various Israeli prophets had messages to the Gentile nations; however, apart from Jonah a reluctant prophet, we have no evidence of any other prophets travelling to the nations to convey the message, which was normally a message of judgement. Isaiah 66:19 indicates an overt sending to the nations, yet this is clearly an eschatological passage that looks into the distant future and Gentiles seem to be the prime agents, not Israel.

Köstenberger and O'Brien (2001: 35) conclude on the same note that, "To contend that Israel had a missionary task and should have engaged in Mission as we understand it today, goes beyond the evidence. There is no suggestion in the Old Testament that Israel should have engaged in 'cross-cultural' or foreign Mission." They concur with Scobie (1992) that Israel was to relate to the nations (1) historically in terms of incorporation, which is, receiving Gentiles into the community and (2) eschatologically in terms of ingathering in the last days. Furthermore, Israel was never denounced by the prophets for failing to go to the nations (: 383-305). C. J. H. Wright (2006: 24-25) seizes the idea of the Mission of Israel possibly best when he claims that although Israel did not have a missionary mandate to go to

the nations, “one might say that Israel had a missionary role in the midst of the nations, implying that they had an identity and role connected to God’s ultimate intention of blessing the nations.” In whatever way, Israel is pictured as failing regarding her role among the nations. Israel did not either go to the nations as God required, nor did they live as a holy and righteous nation among the nations. Israel is repeatedly seen as falling into idolatry and injustice, and they have failed to display the righteousness and glory of God amidst the nations. They failed to live exemplary lives regarding what it meant to be a people under the blessings of God. Bauckham affirms this by saying:

“The difference between Israel and all the nations lies only in the undeserved election of Israel by YHWH define this abbreviation to be his one people for the sake of bringing blessing to the peoples. Israel is called to be faithful to her covenant with YHWH, not or the sake of superiority but in order to model this covenant relationship as an invitation to others. Israel’s ethnocentric temptation was to presume on her privilege” (2003: 61). (2003, p. 61).

This is the reason why after the Israelites’ exile era, their attitude tended to be one of pride and disregard for the Gentile nations. According to the researcher, Israel attempted to retain the Abrahamic blessing for herself, thus rejecting her call to become a means of blessing to the nations. The action of Israel as a nation resulted in forfeiting its blessings altogether. However, in spite of their human failure, God would fulfill his plan by bringing his blessing to the nations as illustrated by the figure below:



**Figure 7: The centripetal movement of Mission in the Old Testament**

The figure shows the centripetal movement of the nations being attracted as if by a magnet force to the glory of the Lord manifest in the nation of Israel where the surrounding nations were coming to Zion to have the centralised worship of the Lord in the temple.

Johannes Blauw (1962:35), for example, writes, “there is no thought of Mission in the Old Testament in the centrifugal sense in which it comes to the fore in the New Testament.”

In other words, the New Testament marks the opposite of the Old Testament. The New Testament model is the centrifugal movement of Mission where God’s new people are sent to the nations and to be witnesses among the nations. In this instance, the nations are not coming to God’s people in Jerusalem, but God’s people are going to the nations as witnesses in sharing God’s word. In the New Testament is the age of the spiritual transformation of Mission from centripetal to centrifugal and yet it is at the consummation and fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological vision that the direction will reverse again and the nations will be drawn centripetally to Zion, the New Jerusalem (Nichols & Corwin 2010: 23). In essence, this points to when the Lord will come for the second time; thus, when the people of other faiths worship God as the only true God. God’s plan of salvation could unfold in history one step at a time, so the Old Testament lays a foundation for the New; seeds planted there will sprout and bear much fruit later. Both Testaments look forward to the completion of God’s plan for the nations in the eschatological vision of people of every nation, tribe, and tongue worshipping God in the New Jerusalem.

Therefore, the Old Testament teachings on doing Mission with particular reference to God and the nations are:

- God is the Creator of all and sovereign Lord over all peoples and nations.
- Though all humans have rebelled against God's rule, God in his grace has taken the initiative to provide a way of reconciliation, bringing them back into his Kingdom.
- As a result of God's call of Abraham and Israel, they were not only to be blessed but were also to become a blessing, mediating God's righteousness, glory, and salvation to the nations.
- Israel's primary form of witness was to live righteously and worship wholeheartedly, thus manifesting the kingdom of God in the midst of the nations.
- Israel was to proclaim the salvation of the Lord in the midst of the nations and to invite them to come and worship the Lord and worship him alone.
- Israel failed in its Mission as "light of the nations," but the Messiah would fulfill this role, create a new kingdom people and send them as his witnesses to the nations.
- The day would come when Gentiles from all nations would worship the Lord and be included in his Kingdom. Zion is depicted as the centre point to which the nations flow.
- God will one day judge all nations, overthrow all evil, and fully establish his Kingdom of peace and righteousness over all creation. (Nichols & Corwin 2010: 24).

The centrifugal movement of Mission in the New Testament marks a reversal, with God's new people being sent out to the nations to be a witness among the nations. The nations are not to come to God's people in Jerusalem but God's people are to go to the nations. As we shall see in the next chapter, in the age of the Spirit the transformation of Mission is radical than the reversal of centripetal to centrifugal. Yet at the consummation and fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological vision, the direction will again reverse and

the nations will be drawn centripetally to Zion, the New Jerusalem (Nichols & Corwin 2010: 23). However, there are few isolated experiences in the Old Testament where individuals undertook mission to foreign lands following captivity, for instance, the four Hebrew boys in the book of Daniel, were taken to Babylon as slaves and in return, they were able to share their faith in God to the Babylonians, another example is the young servant girl living with Naaman (2Kings 5:1-19), she was able to take opportunity of Naaman's sickness to point him to the Living God.

#### **2.4.8 Mission in Psalms: God is worthy of the worship of the nations**

Before examining the Psalms, it is notable that several important texts from the historical books originate in or describe the same approximate period as the Psalms. For instance, first chronicles chapter 16, gives a record of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. During this instance, the song of thanksgiving was echoed in several Psalms, which called Israel to make known the works of the Lord among the people to sing to the earth, proclaim his salvation and tell of his glory among the nations. The people of the earth are called to fear God and the nations are to know that the Lord reigns (Verses 8, 23, 24, 30 and 31).

The book of Psalms provides God's people the hymnbook of the Old Testament. In it God's glory and greatness in relation to the nations is revealed. The sovereignty of God over all peoples and nations is also revealed (e.g. Pss. 22:28; 47:8; 82:8), his glory spreads out "to the ends of the world" (19:4) and all the peoples have seen it (97:6). Several prayers call for God to display his glory in all the earth (Pss. 57:5, 11; 72:19; 108:5). The Psalms chooses the theme of the Abrahamic blessing to the nations. Psalms 67 shows that God blesses Israel with the intent that the blessing may be passed on. The nation of Israel is called to become the means of the blessing of the nations. The election and blessing of Israel by God clearly shows that God has the nations in view.



Additionally, Psalm 72 is a Messianic Psalm with specific importance with regard to Mission to people of other nations or faiths. In this chapter, the prayer continues, “and let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him” (V. 11NASB), the King is praised for his deeds of kindness and liberation (9:12-16). Then verse 17, goes on to say, “May his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines and let men be blessed by him; let nations call him blessed.” It was eventually through the Messianic King, that the Abrahamic promise of blessing for the nations was to come through the lineage of David.

Israel as a nation is called to proclaim God’s acts, glory, and salvation among the nations:

Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done. (Ps. 9:11) Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. (Ps. 105:1)

An eschatological vision of the day when all nations will come to acknowledge the glory of the Lord and worship him is clearly expressed in the Psalms:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. (Ps. 22:27-29). All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to Your name. For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God. (Ps. 86:9-10)

Moreover, the Psalms frequently call the nations to recognise God as Lord and to come and worship him and him only:

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord Glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns.” The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity (Ps. 96:1-10).

The Psalmist further goes on to call the nations of the earth to come and adore God, he says,

Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord. (Ps. 117) The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim. Let the earth shake. Great is the Lord in Zion; is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; he is holy. (Ps. 99:1-3).

#### **2.4.9 Mission implications for Israel for other religions**

The children of Israel subsisted in a pluralistic world of several religions and gods. Each individual and people had their own deities and cults, which they worshipped. Nevertheless, Israel's service of worship was to be incessant affirmation of God in the midst of the people. Since Israel was the centre of God's Mission to other nations, what God did in Israel was to be observed by nations. Israel's very existence was a witness to the point of God's intercession. According to the researcher, the song of Moses and the Lamb recorded in Exodus 15 was the celebration of Israel's great deliverance. The first part of the song (Exod. 15:1-10) narrates the great proceedings in the exodus, including the tragedy, which overcame Egypt. The dishonour of biblical religion is that God acted in the past, hence, this situation set Biblical religion in contrast to the religions of the world. For example, Hinduism is not prominently interested in history, as Klostermaier (2014) indicates that in the absence of a general denominator and of an authoritative institution it is impossible to construct a schema for a history of Hinduism that offers a clear and commonly accepted periodisation, for it has continually been developing new expressions. Hinduism is mainly a religion of legend, very similar to the religion of Canaanites in its formation. The Canaanite religion was a religion of legend that shadowed a nature of myth cycle of dying and rising with seasons. Canaanite fertility cult was set on this cycle. However, the religion of Israel did not revolve in a circle; it moved forward to a goal, for God had acted in the past (Hedlund, 1991:40).

#### ***2.4.9.1 God and the nations in salvation historical overview***

The nations' history of salvation is linked to God's purposes and specifically, to God's relationship with the nations of the world. It is clear that during creation, all was good and there was harmony between God and His creatures (Gen. 1-2). At the point when sin entered the earth, the relationships of God's creatures with God and those between humanity became alienated. Creation itself is harmed by the results of a human being's rebellion against God's reign and the penalties are overwhelming (Gen. 3). Indeed, at the perfect ending, when God brings history to a close, his reign shall be fully restored over humanity, over all nations (Ps. 96:10,13; Isa. 2:4; lev. 19:15. (Rom. 8:19-22), and his Kingdom will be established in glory as the heavenly voices declare: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord his Christ and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15b; cl. 12:10).

In the era between creation and consummation, God redeems and draws humanity from all the nations of the world to Himself by restoring his supremacy. According to the researcher, not only will the nations be brought into obedience to the supreme Messianic King, but, in the book of Revelations Chapter 5, John's vision provides God's people with a further preview of what God's finished plan for the nations looks like. Indeed, the work of redemption by the Lamb of God has been proclaimed and received by human beings from all nations of the world. Consequently, in a short while, thereafter a similar vision of heavenly adoration is explained:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9-10)

These two verses give the terms which explain the diversity of humanity who will comprise the eschatological adoration of God: nation, tribe, people and language. Thus,

human beings are characterised as representatives from every group of people. In other words, as Charles H. H. Scobie (1992:285) says, the biblical canon from Genesis 11 provides the description of the scattering of the nations on the one hand, while on the other hand the book of Revelation gives the description of the gathering of the nations. Therefore, it forms a grand envelope structure frame of the entire story of the Bible. The biblical story of God accomplishing his grand goal can be well traced to the Old Testament (Ott, Strauss, & Tennent 2010: 5-6).

#### ***2.4.9.2 The beginning and the origin of Mission to the nations***

There was perfect unity between God and humanity at creation as this is noted in the Scripture. The sin of Adam and Eve was a problem of distrusting God's goodness and rebelling against his loving authority over their lives. More so, if the purpose of human beings is to love and give glory to God, then the heart of sin is the refusal of such a correlation with God. In the kingdom of God, it consists of living under God's righteousness and his loving supremacy. On the other hand, in sin there is rebellion against the supremacy of God. The immediate outcome is shame as Adam and Eve's eyes were opened and discovered they were naked after they had disobeyed and sinned. They therefore endeavoured to hide from God, but it was not possible, since God Himself kept on pursuing them (Gen 3:7-8). This is the point where the story of God's Mission begins.

According to the researcher, God takes the initiative in reinstating the broken relationship with humanity in several ways. First, God Himself pursued Adam and Eve, Genesis 3:9: "But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" God's lingering words used in this text discloses the heart of God for the lost human beings. God is in the Mission seeking lost humanity. He does not leave them hiding from Him. In God's Mission, He does not immediately execute the death sentence to the lost. He is in the business of seeking them out, calls them to account, and speaks with them with a tender heart without condemning

them in anyway. Indeed, God sets a model base for conducting Mission to people of other faiths.

In Genesis 3:14-19, God pronounces a sequence of curses. However, in these curses He included a promise, which could be called pre-evangelism, a hidden preannouncement of the gospel of salvation (Ott, Strauss & Tennent 2010:6). God said to the serpent: “and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15). Therefore, it is clear that one day a descendant of Eve, although wounded Himself, will eventually overthrow Satan and the evil that he owns.

God provided Adam and Eve with clothes made of skins; of course, not of fig tree leaves and this is before He banished them from Paradise (Gen. 3:21, cf. v. 7). God covered their shame by the shedding of animal blood, which God provided. This shedding of the animal blood was foreshadowing God’s final provision to cover human sin with the shed blood of his Son Jesus Christ as prophesied in the Old Testament. The overwhelming effects of evil became obvious in the subsequent chapters of the book of Genesis, peaking in the obliteration of all humanity and anything with life in the world except Noah and his family (Gen 6-9). But on the other hand, it was not long after Noah emerged from the ark, God entered into a new covenant with Noah, again displaying His mercy (Gen 9:20-27).

#### ***2.4.9.3 Mission of salvation to all nations of the world***

God’s salvation is for all people of the world. His initiative in history brought to humanity the possibility of salvation and initiated Mission to the whole planet earth. Essentially, the universe is as a result of the missionary message of the Old Testament. According to the researcher, the Old Testament makes a recurrent mention of the nations of the world as the basis of Mission (e.g., Gen. 10; 12:3; 17:4; Exod.19:5; Deut. 32:43; I kings 14:24; 2kings 19:19; 1Chron. 16:24; 2Chron. 6:33; Pss. 2; 47:8; 67; 86:9; 102:15; 117; Isa.

2:2-3; 42:6; 60:3; 11; 66:18; Jer. 10:7; 22:8; 46:1; Ezek. 36:24; Dan. 4:1; 7:14; Joel 3:12; Obad. 15; Mic 42:2; Zach. 8:22; 9:10; Mal. 1:11). God does among the nations, what he does with the nation of Israel, the chosen one (Exod. 14:4; 15:14; Deut. 28:10; Jer. 22:8; Ezek. 20:22). In these passages of the Bible, it is clear that the nations are the people of the world, specifically people surrounding Israel as depicted in the Old Testament history. The redemption history that centres around the nation of Israel is of specific significance to the people of other faiths. God is not limited to the Hebrew people, but he has as well a relationship with the whole world and its people. Consequently, if God is a God of the whole world, then he must indispensably be interested in the salvation of all the people of all nations, including the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Babylonians, and people of all languages (Gen. 10) as God desires a relationship with every family of humanity, language and people (Gen 10:5, 20, 31). God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:9-10 is indeed a worldwide covenant.

It clear that from the Scripture that God is well known in the nation of Israel (Exod. 4:31; 9:14; 14:31; 18:11; Deut. 4:35; 1 Kings 20:28; 2 Chron. 2:12; Ps76:1). The focus here is on the people of God in a series of relationships. The challenge for Israel as seen in these texts was how to live within a world of consistencies and standards of basic religions other than their own. It is in many ways similar to the church in Digoland of the South Coast of Kenya today. Thus, in the world of the Old Testament, Israel was faced with social and cultural changes, alien ideologies, and structures of injustice, political commotion, and problems of poverty, war, and violence. The same is happening in the world today. In this setting the people of God were called like us to bear witness of their existence, service, and adoration as in indicated in Exodus "If you carefully obey me and are faithful to the terms of my promise, then out of all the nations you will be my own special possession, even though

the whole world is mine. You will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.' These are the words you must say to the Israelites." (19:5-6).

It is explicit that the Old Testament provides no foundation for Christians' isolation from the world. The Bible always makes it clear that as God's children, we are in the world but not of the world. We are God's representatives in doing the missional work of God. Our religious life with its Godward aspect must have a service of Mission to the people of other faiths in the world. This is the reason Israel was set in the midst of the nations where she did not pull out from social conflict. The Old Testament continually warns against being absorbed in the world; however, it also stands against giving up on the world as far as doing Mission to the people of other faiths. The nation of Israel was to maintain her uniqueness of witnessing to other nations which worship other gods other than the God of heaven. In other words, the Mosaic Law, which was to shape the lifestyle of the Old Testament people of God equally served to accentuate their distinctive identity and purpose in the world. All the same, it was unfortunate that Israel to a great extent failed to carry out her duty of Mission as representatives of God. However, there were a few exceptions. Solomon at the dedication of the temple prayed "...that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as Your people Israel" (I Kings 8:43). One of the reasons for the building of the temple at Jerusalem was to reach out through witnessing to "all people of the earth" I Kings 8:60; cf. I Kings 8:41-43). The house of God was made to be "the house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. 56:7; cf. Mark 11:17). The prophets, for instance Isaiah, reminded the Israelites of their forgotten responsibility to do the Mission of witnessing: "You are my witnesses, says the Jehovah" (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; 49:3, 6). God's relationship to the nations of the earth, through his people is of great significance (Hedlund, 1991, pp. 25-26). The Mission was intended to embrace the entire planet earth (Gen 10:32; 9:9 ff.).

## 2.5 GOD'S MISSION CREATION OF KINGDOM PEOPLES, THE PATRIARCHS

According to Genesis, following the primal history of the scattering of the peoples and the table of the nations, what follows is the call of Abram in Genesis 12, as C. Wright (1996: 39) affirms, which was "God's response to the problem of the nations of humanity." While Genesis 1-11 explains a worldwide history of God's dealing with human beings and humankind's efforts leading to calamity, Genesis 12 commences with God's specific call of a man to be the Father of a people of God's special selection, eventually leading to a blessing to the whole world. It is clear that much of the remainder of the Old Testament is the story of God's dealing with this selected people. However, entrenched in this particular call is similarly a worldwide purpose that embraces all nations. Repeatedly this theme will reappear in God's relations with Israel. In Genesis 12 there is a clear declaration of one of the greatest promises in the Bible concerning salvation history and God's strategy for the nations of the world:

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave Your land, Your relatives, and Your Father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make Your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed." (12:1-3).

God changed Abram's name to Abraham, the one that he exceptionally blessed and made a great nation from. This is God's specific call. Nevertheless, with this specific call is as well a worldwide intention. Thus, God will pass his blessing to all families of the earth through Abraham. Here the word "Families" in Hebrew is known as *mishpahd*, which equally means nation, tribe, or people. In other words, God's ultimate intent for this blessing promise was not for Abraham alone, it was for all nations of the world. The reason the same promise was repeated to Abraham, then later to Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:3-4; 28:14, where in these first three passages, there was a use of the Hebrew term known as *goy* in place of *mishpahd*, which usually refers to non-Jewish people or nations.



Additionally, God's messages to Abram that those who bless him will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed shows that Abram and his descendants will be God's specific people as they will represent God and be mediators of his grace on earth. How the people where Abram was sent respond to him was to reflect how these people respond to God. In other words, a curse or a blessing for all the people of other nations centres on their relationship to Abraham and his descendants. The fact is that in this last phrase, the emphasis is on God's intention to bless the nations through Abraham, thus the predication of blessing is an assurance to the nations of the world, even though the manner in which the nations will experience this blessing is not shown. However, in Genesis 22, as the promise to Abraham is continual, there is a given a clue: "Through your descendant all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (V18). This great passage is interpreted in the New Testament in reference to Christ, the Messiah. Luke quotes this in the Acts 3:25; and then Paul in Galatians 3:13-16. Indeed, from Abraham the nation Israel came to be, and from the nation of Israel came the Messiah, whose saving death and resurrection became the basis of blessing for people of all nations. It is through Christ that people of every nation will share in the Abrahamic blessing. It is paramount that even though the Abrahamic blessing to the nations reemerges occasionally in the Old Testament writings and to that effect, this fact does not diminish the profound importance of its teaching. The very purpose of Abraham's calling is connected to the well-being of the nations (Ott, Strauss, & Tennent 2010: 8).

The calling of Israel as a nation has a priestly function among other nations, and this seems to be evident in the explicit singling out of Israel as God's specific possession from among all the peoples of God. These particular words are echoed in the New Testament in application to the new people of God, the church in its clear calling in the context of Mission to other nations. The book of first Peter declares this priesthood calling, "but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging God, that you may declare the

praises of him who called you out of darkness into the wonderful light.” (2:9). Kaiser (1981: 76) calls this same text “Israel missionary call.” However, Israel’s priesthood role was to be played out in distinctive relationship to the Lord and they were to set an example in their lifestyle, in this sense they were going to preach to the nations. In addition, Israel’s priestly function is closely related to a holy nation. This nation was intended to live as a people sanctified to the Lord, essentially to be a witness before the nations: according to (Deut. 26:18-19), “the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his reassured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the Lord Your God, as he promised”.

Moreover, as far as Israel was living in obedience to the commandments of God, thus, living under the reign of God, they were to manifest God’s kingdom and they were to remain to be a holy nation of God. In return this was to bring glory to God among the nations and hence draw the pagan nations to inquire about God as Moses wrote: “Observe God’s laws carefully, for this is Your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” (Deut. 4:6-7).

Okoye (2006: 11) affirms this by calling it “community-in-Mission” and that “Israel would be the covenant community that is meant to manifest the nature of Yahweh and the benefits of life under Yahweh. Election would in this case be intimately connected with Mission” (ibid 3-4). The reason why God chose Israel was in preparation for the complete opening and revelation of his universal intentions. He chose Israel with the intention that she would speak to the other nations. Whenever Israel forgot this and turned away from the nations in withdrawn pride, prophets like Amos, Jeremiah and Isaiah lashed out at the

people's ethnocentric pretence and charged them for undermining God's actual plans (Amos 9 :9-10 Joannes Verkuyl in Winter and Hawthorne 2009: 43). (Amos 9:9-10 Joannes Verkuyl in Winter & Hawthorne, 2009, p. 43).

## **2.6 OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF BELIEVING GENTILES WHICH GOD USED TO REACH GENTILES**

The Old Testament provides some examples of the believing Gentile. The first individual to begin with is Melchizedek in Genesis 14. He is described as a "King of Salem" and a "priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18). Melchizedek was from Canaan and he is the one who blessed Abram "by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth," and is the one who Abram gave the tithe; a tenth of all he had taken as booty, in his rescue of his nephew Lot. This is something that should be taken into consideration as believers of the true God who attempt to reach out to the people of other faiths who might be surrounded with pagan culture. This was the case with Melchizedek, a King and priest, in the midst of the pagan culture, who continued to be a true believer in the Man of promise who was to come. This King and priest is one of many clues in the Old Testament that Gentile individuals were coming to know the one who would be later called the Messiah or Jesus Christ.

The second example of another Gentile believer is Jethro who was known to be the "King of Midian" (Gen. 18:1). Jethro's testimony is a bridge to those who do not expect much of a desert Midianite in the Arabian sands. When his son-in-law Moses came back from Egypt and told Jethro everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for the sake of Israel, Jethro broke out into rapturous praise to God. He shouted out:

Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the other gods, for he did this to those who treated Israel arrogantly (Exod. 18:10-11).

Further, Jethro brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God as Aaron and the elders of Israel broke bread together and participated in joint worship of the Living God (Kaiser Jr 2000: 40). This is one the significant instance of setting a good base on doing Mission to people of other faiths. It is fact that one can wonder as to when Jethro kept on to the knowdge of this kind of redeeming feature. Could it be that Moses shared the Abrahamic promise with him and made him continue to put all his trust in the coming “seed” of a woman, the “seed of Shem and Abraham’s lineage?” This suggests that Moses, his son in-law must have done so; for there is no other means of justification for this kind of Mission result.

Another example is Balaam, the Son of Beor who was the resident of the Upper Mesopotamia at Pethor, near the River Euphrates in his homeland (Num. 22:5). He was a Gentile as well with a gift of prophecy. He accurately delivered the word from God over four times. Although, his effort was seemingly to satisfy his Moabites host, it made him come to a bitter and grievous end (Num. 31:8). However, that does not undermine the fact that Balaam was a Gentile who addressed God personally in prayer and as well received a direct word from God for individuals in Moab and Israel. This is a clear indication that God was seemingly calling Gentiles to Himself while he was calling the Israelite alike.

Another example is that Rahab, the prostitute, and her act of hiding the spies of God who had gone to spy the land of Canaan showed that she feared the God of Israel more than she feared the King of Jericho. Joshua chapter 2 gives her straightforward testimony as she came to acknowledge the God of the Israelites:

and she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that Your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord Your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. (vv. 9-11)

This action of Rahab was an act of saving faith and this made her one of the heroes of faith as they are listed in the book Hebrews 11:31.

Ruth, the Moabite woman, is the fifth example. The Bible points out that when Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband, came to find out who this woman was, and her choice to leave her native country to follow her mother-in-law, he was overwhelmed. He participated by saying, "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:12). Kaiser Jr. (2000: 42) notes that the Son she later bore to Boaz was the grandfather of David, which is in the lineage of the Messiah.

Another example is Naaman, a man who suffered from a skin disease. His healing portrays a picture of the God who is the Lord of all the nations blessing Gentiles, even during Old Testament times. Naaman's story does not only show how God used a pagan general to carry out the battles with the results he had desired, but how God also did His Mission using the witness of a little girl who was used as a forerunner of the diaspora that would spread the gospel of the promise of God's plan, even though she had been put into the most trying situations. This makes it clear that the Mission of God in the Old Testament was not exclusively for the Jewish people. While the nation of Israel remains at the centre of the gospel story, it did not mean that the gospel in view was not a global event. God's spirit touched the little girl and she spoke up with confidence, and this resulted in Naaman's healing and salvation (Kaiser 2005:50). Because of Naaman's dramatic cure and conversion, Elisha the prophet, who declared healing on him in the name of the Living God, was made to visit Damascus and Syria. He did God's Mission through healing in this new area, which seemed to be unreachable by God's message (2 king8:7-15). Indeed, Naaman's healing has many missiological implications as God's children endeavour to do Mission to the people of other faiths.

## **2.7 MISSION OF GOD AND THE NATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament has portrayed a clear vision of God's sovereignty over the nations, his desire to bless the nations and his final inclusion of all the people in his Kingdom.

However, the vision shown is in the future. According to the researcher, although Israel failed as God's Servant in the manifestation of the righteousness and the glory of God before the nations, the real Servant, the promised Messiah, would come as a Saviour and as a light to the people outside Israel, the Gentiles, whom by instance could be referred to, as the people of other faiths. This promised Messiah comes with the Abrahamic promise of blessing for all the families of the earth (Gen 3:13-16). This is in connection with the way the nations of the world are gathered unto the Lord as manifest in the New Testament. 1 Peter 2:3 gives a clear picture that the followers of Jesus Christ are to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood for the nations. In other words, God's people are to live a life so that 'the people of other faiths' will see their good lives and give glory to the God of heaven (v. 12). It should be the Mission of every Christian to live right in this world of many ungodly religions. The New Testament makes it clear that God's people are to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ with every person that he has created and that includes people of all faiths and no one should be left out.

### **2.7.1 Jesus' Mission to a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42)**

The fourth chapter of the book of John provides a great picture of the spectrum of Jesus' Mission, which was not only for the Samaritan woman but also for her entire community. Furthermore, this instance followed several events like the cleansing of the temple of Jerusalem, the Pharisee Nicodemus' struggle to comprehend Christ's teaching about spiritual birth and the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus. Jesus made a decision to travel back to Galilee and, rather than avoiding passing through Samaria, he intentionally went through it. He then crossed obstacles of bias and tradition to asked a Samaritan woman, hated even by her own community for a drink of water (4:1-42). This chapter sets a base for a

model for a believer's personal evangelism, thus doing Mission to people of other faiths, even the outcasts and people who worship other gods instead of God the creator. For instance, this is very applicable for Christians who seek to reach Muslim women with the Gospel of Jesus as we see how Jesus spent much time with a woman who had already been written off by the community. Jesus saw and met her at her moment of need and through her Jesus reached the entire community. John's Gospel in the context of the discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, makes it clear concerning the place of Samaritans in God's plan of salvation. Likewise, here, the Samaritans could represent the people of other faiths who are surrounded by the Christian communities. Indeed, it is to this Samaritan woman that Jesus first proclaimed in John's Gospel that he was the Messiah (v. 26). It is an important lesson for Christ's disciples, that Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world and not just for the Jews (v. 42) as some perceived it to be.

### **2.7.2 The Samaritan Mission: Luke-Acts**

Luke is one of the New Testament writers who is clearly interested in the Samaritan Mission. Luke emphasised in his history of the early church that, between reaching Jews and going to the ends of the world, the Gospel of Jesus had to go to the Samaritans. This was proclaimed not only in Acts 1:8, but it was what happened in Acts 8:2-8. Perhaps it might have been very shocking to Jesus' disciples when they heard that they were to be witnesses in Samaria (Acts 1:8). Definitely, they did not go there until they were forced to flee from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-8). Indeed, what occurred when they reached there is important. The Samaritans were prepared to listen to and to accept the Gospel with great joy after God performed miracles in their territory. The Church in Jerusalem was able to send Peter and John to ascertain what was going on in Samaria and at the same time, God sent the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans so that everyone could see that they were also included in the kingdom of God. John chapter 4 was to teach the Jewish Christians a lesson in which they

were to learn that the Samaritans might well even be more receptive to Jesus and His Gospel than the Jews. Thus, Glaser (2005:164-165) indicates that the Samaritans appeared three times in the Gospel.

Cornelius for instance, was a person from 'another faith', a Gentile, yet God heard his prayers. His prayers and help for the needy came to God like the fragrance of a sacrifice (Acts10:4). In answering, God sent Peter so that not only Cornelius but also his entire household could hear the good news by Jesus. God affirmed His Mission by sending the Holy Spirit in a remarkable way. The message is clear: God hears people's prayers and wants to save them even if they are not part of his covenant people, the Jews. According to the researcher, Peter was a Jew, and a disciple of Jesus but he did not comprehend what God wanted in his vision. He believed that ritual cleanliness was more important than proselytisation of the gospel to Gentiles. He was astonished that God sought to speak to Cornelius (Acts10:34, 47) a man from another faith. He was further amazed that God needed him to go to Cornelius' house (vv. 27-29). Once more, the message is clear here that God's concern for people was greater than Peter's. The salvation of Cornelius was much more significant than ritual cleanliness. The Gospel of Jesus is made to be for all people regardless of the religious affliction. The problem is that the Christians or those called or chosen by God may not be willing to share it. Moreover, after Peter's lesson was learned, and the acceptance of the Gentile converts by the Jerusalem church, Luke in Acts spoke about God's Mission to the Gentiles through Paul. He first started with the Jews but later Paul was seen to be in more contact with the Gentiles. Indeed, there are some particularly significant encounters with people from the Gentile faiths (Glaser 2005:168).

## **2.8 MISSION IN THE AGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

It is important that before examining some specific teachings of some New Testament authors and books, we need to grip the greatness of transformation in Mission that happened



with the finishing of Christ's work of redemption, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the birth of the church. This kind of transformation essentially affected every part of the New Testament's representation of Mission. It can be noted from the previous discussion that the movement of Mission shifts from centripetal in the Old Testament where Israel attracts the nations to come and worship the Lord in Zion, to centrifugal in the New Testament, where there is clear sending of Christ's witnesses to the nations.

As already observed, the Old Testament often anticipated that the salvation of persons was to be from the furthest nations. However, the same Old Testament is less clear about just how that would happen. A few passages give a glimpse of what could come to full realisation in the New Testament era. The prophet Ezekiel predicted the day when God will give his people his Spirit so that they can obey him from their hearts (Ezek. 36:26-27). Isaiah foresaw the day when the word of the Lord would go out from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3; see also Mic. 4:2) and also when a true Servant will be a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6). Gentiles will therefore welcome God's messengers to the distant coastlands, declaring God's glory among the nations (Isa. 66:19). Nevertheless, even though this was a remarkable statement, it was embedded in a vision with Israel at the centre, "And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. They will bring Your brothers from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord" (Isa. 66:18,20a). Old Testament Mission visualises the nations flowing to Zion to worship the one true God in the temple, where God's presence on earth was mainly denoted.

Moreover, the New Testament does not forsake this centripetal vision, yet it shows it in even more glorious terms. In Matthew 8:11-12 and Luke 13:29, Jesus speaks of the day when Gentiles will come and gather from east and west, from north and south to be included in the kingdom of God. In his vision, John describes the final entrance of the kingdom, which

includes a “New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven,” where God’s people live and worship, where “the dwelling of God is with men” (Rev. 21:2-3). Revelations 21 goes on further to explain the glory and presence of the Lord in the New Jerusalem with amazing terms, far exceeding the glory of the Old Jerusalem temple: “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (vv. 22-23). The centripetal movement vision of the nations of the earth coming together to worship God is finally fulfilled, “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no other day, will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it” (vv. 24-26).

It is clear that in the Old Testament there is centralisation of Mission at Jerusalem, while in the New Testament era there is the sending of missionaries to the nations and decentralisation of Mission until the consummation when the nations of the earth will be gathered back together to the new and more glorious Jerusalem. However, the more central account of Mission in the New Testament is that of the intermediate period between the first and second comings of Christ, between the instigation of the kingdom and the complete establishment of his Kingdom and between the old Jerusalem and the new. This intermediate period is the age of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Subsequently, as the Mission of Jesus Christ the Messiah unfolded, the Holy Spirit was revealed to be present at His conception (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35). This was at Simon’s revelation (Lk 2:25-35) at Jesus’ baptism (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22) and at His temptation (Mt 4:1; Mk 1:12; Lk 4:1) at the inauguration of ministry (Lk 4:18). The Inspirer and Guide of Jesus (Lk 10:21, 12:10; Jn 3:34) and the One who enabled Jesus to bring His sacrifice (Heb 9:14). It was also the power by which Jesus was resurrected from the dead (Rom 1:4; I Tm 3:16), and the One who accompanies Jesus’ disciples in the ongoing Mission (Lk 24:49;

Jn 20:21-23; Acts 13:1-3). It is acknowledged that even though many volumes of Mission theology have been written, there has often been little attention paid to the Holy Spirit (Kuitse 1993:106-110). The New Testament provides a clear model for the redeeming Mission of God, which cannot be understood apart from the function of the Holy Spirit. Jesus cautioned the disciples against endeavouring to engage in Mission work without the Holy Spirit: “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Lk 24:49); Jesus further “charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait” (Acts 1:4) for the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah, our front-runner in Mission, who prepares, equips and empowers for the difficult task of bearing witness in the world where there will always be opposition to and persecution of disciples (Mt 28:20; 2 Cor. 3:8, 4:7-10).

In this age, The Last Days, the Holy Spirit brings together the two poles of God’s saving action, the Christological and the eschatological. Berkhof (1964:35) argues that during this period, the Spirit is portrayed as “the expansion of the divine saving presence over the earth” from the faithful Jesus, the Suffering Servant, through the faithful community the church. The Spirit leads in continual witness to the world of God’s salvation until the end of time. In placing the Pentecost account within the context of Luke’s distinctive theology of the Spirit, it can be argued that the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, not only as the source of new covenant reality, but rather as the source of power for effective witness. This is specifically mentioned by Luke in Acts 1.8. Luke’s theology of the Holy Spirit is seen to be different from that of Paul, which is essential for a Pentecostal understanding of the baptism Spirit. It is affirmative that the emphasis of Luke is on the Spirit’s role in equipping the church for its Mission in the world.

Jesus’ reception of the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River was the means by which He was prepared to carry out His Messianic Mission to the world. Isaiah records the words of

Christ: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour..." (61:1-2). Consequently, the verb used in this text, "He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour," highlight proclamation as the primary thrust of Jesus' anointing. These words of Jesus in Isaiah and Luke present Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit at the Jordan as a prophetic anointing, the means by which he was equipped to carry out his divinely appointed Mission" (Menzies 2008:95).

Menzies (2008:98) further argues that Luke's interpretation of the sifting and separation activity of the Holy Spirit of which John prophesied (Lk. 3:16-17) was to be accomplished in the Spirit-empowered Mission of the church. Thus, for Luke, John's prophecy was originally fulfilled in the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples at Pentecost were baptised in the Holy Spirit and as a result empowered to bear bold witness for Jesus (Acts 1:8). In a wider sense, through the power given by the Holy Spirit, the disciples were inspired in their preaching of the word, and through the preaching of Jesus, the people were sifted like the wind sifts the chaff from the grain (cf. Lk. 2:34).

Luke, speaking of the "promise" with reference to the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4, 2:33, 38-39), can be confirmed to refer to the gift of the Spirit of prophecy that was promised in the book of Joel, where the Lord says: "...I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2 :38). This promise was initially fulfilled at Pentecost, whereby it enabled the disciples to take up their prophetic calling to the world (Acts 1:8). This message is evidently repeated at the end of Luke's gospel (Lk 24:49) and at the commencement of his record of the Mission of the early church (Acts 1:4) for emphasis purposes to ensure that this

point is not missed as the church implements its Mission to the entire world. In agreement with Luke, it is clear that the Spirit should be understood to be the source of the prophetic event that came upon the disciples at Pentecost and aiming to equip them for their prophetic calling. Upon the disciples' baptism in the Holy Spirit, they were driven forward into the world of opposition where the God-given Spirit enabled them to bear valiant witness for Christ, witness to His death, burial and resurrection.

Many Christians in this age have been impacted by the manifestation of the miraculous power of the Spirit, particularly in the ministries of healing and deliverance. McGee (2001) records that throughout the history of missions, there have been many stories of power encounters, which open the heart of many to faith in Christ. For instance, the planting of the first Bantu church in Africa in the 1840s was effected by the Methodist W. J. Davies. He is also known as the "Missionary Elijah," whose prayers brought rain in the midst of severe drought (McGee 2001: 152). Yung (2007:174) argues that the emphasis on healing is so commonplace that it hardly needs more comment, yet something more needs to be said about the deliverance or exorcism ministry. Unfortunately, some of the literature in this area of the Spirit has somewhat sensational tones under the rubric of "spiritual warfare," which certainly is not the most helpful term. This is an area which Western missiological and theological research has seriously neglected in general, hence, the needed emphasis is on those who have worked effectively at the grassroots level in evangelism and pastoral ministries throughout the Two-Thirds of the world. They have discovered that they have to deal with spiritual bondage as a constant problem<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, this is something difficult to communicate to someone who has never been involved in this type of ministry. On the other

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<sup>12</sup>There are plenty of writings on the subject. However, one literature produced by the Lausanne Movement which presents contributions from theologians in an accountable way is Scott A. Moreau, *et al., eds. Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in the Christian Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2002).

hand, those missionaries who have had direct experience in these miraculous manifestations will testify. Firstly, the strong fear of the spirits and of the power of destiny under which many in the non-Western world have lived for centuries and continue to do so. Secondly, the great joy and sense of God's manifestation and deliverance that such freedom from fear brings to a community. This is one crucial reason why many in the Two-Thirds World are coming to Christ. It is also the reason why many indigenous believers in those countries embrace a Pentecostal and charismatic working of the Spirit (:174).

Kroeger (1992:237) notes that there is no Mission theology today, which is complete without an adequate understanding of theology of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology). The Spirit is present and active both in and outside the churches. The truth is that God's loving plan of salvation is definitely inclusive of positive manifestations of the Spirit's gifts. The Spirit of God is as well the Spirit of Jesus Christ who was crucified and risen should not be ignored in the examination of the particular ways in which the Spirit is active in the world and in people's lives. More so, especially in the Mission of the church towards reaching out to people of other faiths with the Gospel. It is significant that as Christians and believers of other faiths engage in a dialogue of life, the active presence and life-giving influence of Jesus' Holy Spirit should be felt. In technical missiological terms, Christians should always operate from the perspective of a "Pneumatological Christocentrism" (Holy Spirit and Christ-centred) (ibid).

The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches which was held in Canberra, Australia, in 1991 wisely chose as their theme of the meeting, "Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation." In so doing they brought strains between contextual and classical theologies to the front (Putney 1991; Clapsis 1991; Raiser 1991). This was in response to the theological emphasis on the incarnational nature of the revelation of God in creation, people, and Mission of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on the presence and activity of

the Spirit in the whole creation was utilised by some to vindicate the baptism of indigenous traditions as carriers of the gospel (Kinnamon 1991:279-82). Raiser (1994; 1991), while speaking on the role stated that “the constitutive role of the Holy Spirit in understanding the Christ event” is necessary if the World Council of Churches is “to be open to the contribution of all traditions and contexts represented in its constituency.” He initiated an attempt to bring tradition and context together. In other words, the Holy Spirit is not limited in any way nor under any circumstances, and at all times is at work.

In the theology of incarnation, the Holy Spirit of God is understood to be at work in the world. This gives both a strong basis for contextual theologising and also contributes to a fuller comprehension of *mission Dei* (God’s Mission). The Holy Spirit is present and at work in the church and in the world. The Spirit of God has no boundaries (Samartha 1990:50-63). According to the researcher, it is vital for one to know that in the understanding of Mission, one must recognise both the Mission of Jesus Christ and the Mission of the Holy Spirit in the whole creation. We must relate the two, recognising and asserting the contextual aspect of all theologies of the Holy Spirit. Kim (2004:46-47) agrees with this by saying that if the confession of the oneness of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is to be meaningful, classical and contextual theologies must find a way of interaction. It is important and pertinent to note that when having a dialogue with people of other faiths, the Holy Spirit should be allowed to prepare the ground for the Word, and the Spirit is the One who leads into all truth. It can be freely encountered outside explicit Christian confession (Samartha 1991:53; Kim 2003:56).

Yung emphasises that Mission must by no means restrict its quest for the manifestations of Jesus’ Spirit to any narrow church circumstances; Mission is integrally universal and if not so, it is not Mission at all (2007:174). The universal activity of the Spirit is a deep anthropological truth, the central unity of all humanity (ibid). It remains that all

humanity as a family and all its members have the same divine origin, mirrored in the divine image that is in all of us (Gen. 1:26-27). Indeed, the loving design of God's salvation is one that universally embraces every person who comes into the world (1Tim 2:4). The Holy Spirit does not function in a discriminatory manner, but is available to all His gracious gifts. Those who are graciously filled with spiritual gifts are enabled to reach all people, all sociocultural circumstances and every aspect in people's lives. It is within this general framework of humanity's basic unity as well as the universality of God's design, as Kroeger (1992:237-238) says, that has prompted Christians to imperatively appreciate other religions and their true values. The crucial Mission of all humanity is one that is divine, so evangelisation never loses sight of God's universal plan and the Spirit's universal presence and activity.

The Spirit is God's power who takes flesh and humanity's face in the life and atoning Mission of Jesus of Nazareth. This Spirit anointed Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan River. It is the Spirit who worked through Jesus in proclaiming the Gospel to the poor, healing the lame, giving sight to the blind, and declaring forgiveness to sinners in the year of the favour of the Lord (Lk. 4:18; Matt. 11:2-5). He came so that humankind may have life more abundantly (John 10:10). It is the Spirit in whom he cried out "Abba, Father" (Luke 10:21-22), and it was the Spirit who gave Jesus the courage to bear His passion and death on the cross for our salvation. It is in this Spirit that the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11), and it is in this Spirit whom Jesus breathed on the disciples, sending them as the Father had sent him, so that they would also be agents of life (John 20:22-23). This same Spirit anointed those who were fearful and timid disciples at Pentecost in the similar manner that Jesus Himself was anointed (Congar 1997:19). Bevans, S. B., Schroeder, R. P., and Schroeder, R. (2004:27) point out that this was the Spirit, as read in the Acts of the Apostles, who expanded the early community's vision to see that all peoples, all nations, all cultures,



all lands are included in God's offer of abundant life of salvation (Acts 2-11). Bevans (2014:29) argues that the Spirit is the principal agent of Mission. Mission is finding out where the Spirit is working and joining in.

Bennema (2011:239) outlines specific aspects of the Spirit's function as follows: (i) the Spirit is the Life-giver in creation and re-creation; (ii) the Spirit informs and empowers the Christian proclamation; (iii) the Spirit facilitates a spatial and socio-religious relocation, thus shaping the believer's identity; (iv) and as a Teacher-Interpreter, the Spirit is the hermeneutical key for Mission, unlocking cultures and providing pathways for the Gospel. This Spirit can initiate any Mission activity that is geared towards reaching out to people of other faiths.

The Old Testament portrays the instrumentality of the Spirit as the power of the divine in communion between God and His people. First, the Spirit is portrayed as God's power who creates and maintains the life of all creatures (Gen 6:3,17; 7:15; Job 7:7; 12:10; 27:3; 33:4; 34:14-15; Ps 33:6; 104:29-30; Isa 42:5); renews and transforms God's people in the future (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-29); and assures God's unceasing communion with his people (Ezek 39:29; cf. Ps 51:11). Since the divine Spirit is offered as the life source, therefore life only occurs in communion with God. Secondly, the Spirit primarily operates as a channel of communication for the divine in humanity's communion with God. Therefore, God instructs His people through Spirit-inspired prophets (cf. Neh 9:30; Zech 7:12), and God rules His people through Spirit-inspired leaders (like Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, David). Israel's Mission was a subsection of God's Mission in that God channelled His Mission to the world through Israel. Israel's Mission in the Old Testament was largely through attraction rather than through outreach, as Israel was required to be a light to the nations. As a result of Israel's failure in her Mission to the nations, God declared that He would bring about His original purposes for Israel and the world through His Spirit-

empowered Messiah (Isa 11:1-9; 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 61:1-11). The biggest contrast between Mission in the Old Testament and New Testament is that in the former, the nations are coming to Jerusalem, while in the latter, the disciples are sent out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Bennema 2011:241).

### **2.8.1 Decentralisation and diffusion of the Gospel**

Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well is specifically illuminating. The woman raises the question about the true place of worship, knowing that the Jews and the Samaritans differ on this issue (John 4:20). Nevertheless, Jesus answers the question that the day will soon come when the true worshipers and their worship of God will be geographically focused on neither Jerusalem nor anywhere else:

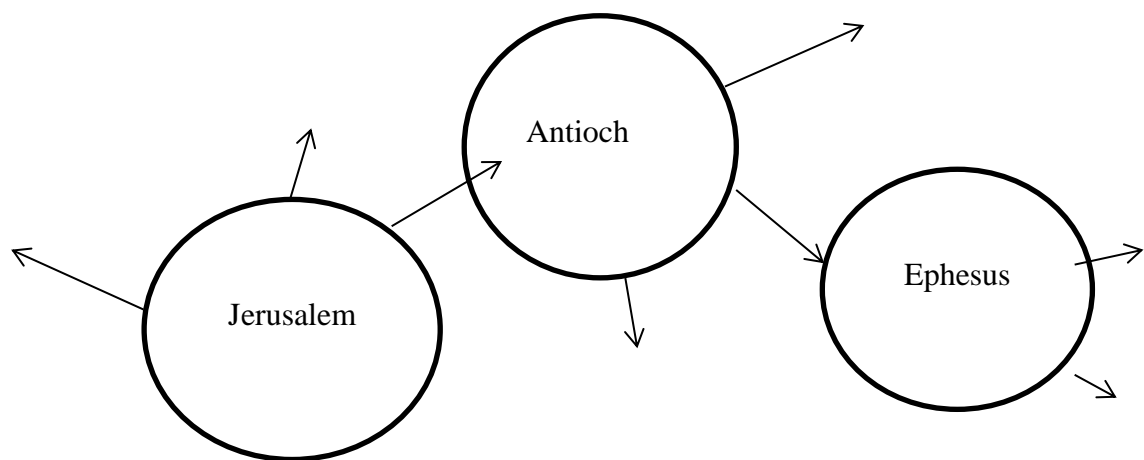
Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24).

With these words, Jesus decentralises and de-territorialises the worship of God. The thought is further unfolded in the New Testament. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 points out that God's presence is no longer tied to the Jerusalem temple (Flemming 2005: 33). The Apostle Paul emphasises that in the age of the Spirit the temple of the Lord is *his people*, independent of any geographical location. Not only are Gentiles included in the new people of God, but they themselves become a living, spiritual temple wherever they are. Paul emphasises that:

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

A parallel thought is described in 1 Peter 2:5 like this "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices

acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” The Old Testament language of priesthood, sacrifice, and temple is applied to the diaspora church, the community of believers themselves being the place of God’s presence wherever it finds itself. Thus, just the decentralisation of the presence of God in the same way the missionary movement is fully decentralised. In Acts 1:8, there is a clear picture, which portrays the disciples becoming witnesses of Christ, hence, moving out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This seems at first to be centrifugal, with Jerusalem still at the centre. However, shortly the Mission in the New Testament progresses to have several centres (see fig. 2.1). This is a clear perspective that anywhere where God’s new people and the church, are found, there is a prospective sending and gathering point for Mission. In other words, Jesus Himself becomes the central point around which the nations of the earth will gather.



**Figure 8: The Centifugal, decentralised movement of Mission in the New Testament**

It is indeed, explicit that even the first Christians were slow to grasp this new reality and Jerusalem remained for some time the central point of authority in the early church. However, the missionary movement of the Holy Spirit had already decentralised the Mission of God through the church. The city of Antioch had become the centre of sending missionaries and of reporting the Gentile Mission for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-

28). The city of Ephesus later on became a new centre of Mission from which the gospel spread to Colossae and the Lycos Valley. At the same time, throughout the centuries the gospel has spread from various centres: Rome, Iona (Celtic Mission in the Middle Ages), Herrnhut Zinzendorf's Moravian community from which the first major Protestant missionary movement originated. London, the home of the earliest Protestant Mission societies) and Chicago, "Nairobi, Seoul, Buenos Aires. Witnesses from these centres cross the geographic, political, and cultural barriers (Bauckham 2003:76). Furthermore, even in the early church the gospel spread not only through the ministry of the Apostles. The first Christians who took the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch were from Cyprus and Gyrene (Acts 12:20).

This kind of decentralisation and diffusion in these days of globalisation has never been more evident as such, when many local congregations become more directly involved in sending missionaries and establishing international partnerships bypassing denominational structures and Mission agencies. Thus, wherever the church is planted, a new potential sending point has been established. Whenever a new ethnic group is reached for Christ, those people become potential missionaries to yet another group. Therefore, it is better to speak of the decentralisation and diffusion of Mission in the New Testament than to speak of centrifugal Mission. Bauckham (2003) warns that, "To substitute another physical centre for Jerusalem, whether Rome or Byzantium in earlier times or Western Europe in the modern age of missions, was always a mistake and however understandable" (ibid).

### **2.8.2 Jesus and the nations: The Gospels**

Looking from the perspective of the very inception of Jesus's life and ministry, the nations are in view. The prayer of Simeon at the presentation of the baby Jesus in the temple pointed to His Messianic role in relation to the Gentiles. Isaiah 49:6, says "For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation

to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:30-32). Likewise, John the Baptist quoted from Isa. 40:3-5, announcing that now “all mankind will see God’s salvation” (Luke 3:6). Jesus as well opens his public ministry in the Nazareth synagogue by the reading from Isaiah 61:1-2 and declaring Himself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic hope (Luke 4:18-20). Mathew also notes the citation of Jesus of Isaiah 42:1-4, where he claimed to be the Servant who portrays. His coming as the fulfillment of the Messianic expectation of Mission to the nations. However, concerning Jesus’s earthly ministry, he repeatedly indicated that he came first to the people of Israel and that his ministry to Gentiles remained to be secondary (Matt. 15:24; Mark 7:16-17). This is in continuation of the Old Testament’s vision of blessing starting with and by Israel. Even the sending of the disciples by Jesus was also initially limited to the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5-6). Actually, it was only after Jesus had fully completed his ministry of redemption on the cross that the Mission to Gentiles was fully launched. It is indeed sad and ironical as the writer of the Gospel of John states that Jesus “came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11 NASB). On the other hand, is the contrary, where by faith the Gentiles were frequently responding to Jesus. For instance, the worshipping of the magi from the East (Matt 2:1-11), the Roman Centurion (Matt 8:5-13), the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24), the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:7-29) and the other Roman centurion at the cross who confessed that, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39 NIV).

Moreover, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls his disciples the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). This is possibly an echo from the prophet Isaiah where he mentions of the Servant being a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Furthermore, as Jesus cleansed the temple, he recalled the vision of Isaiah 56:7 and stated, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. However, you have made it ‘a den of robbers’” (Mark 11:17). There is also an embedded eschatological vision of

nations coming to Zion to worship as cited from the book of Isaiah. In general, Jesus places the enclosure of the Gentiles and the bringing of the Gentiles in the future. He says, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). In other words, in doing this, he implies that those outside the flock of Israel are to be included in God’s people as one flock, the so called people of other faiths who will accept the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus looks forward to the day when people will come from the “east and west” to be comprised alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11).

It is clear that as the end time approaches, Jesus makes a notable statement, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14; cf. Mark 13:10). These words explicitly indicate that the movement of Mission of God will be enhanced and the gospel of the kingdom will be brought to the nations and to the peoples of other faiths besides Israel. This is a Mission situation to be completed prior to Jesus Christ’s return and the final coming of God’s kingdom soon. This same thought is indirectly mentioned in Matthew 26:13, where Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” It is imperative that the gospel will be preached among all the nations of the earth before the end comes. It should be well understood that Jesus’s own ministry, teaching, and his disciple’s initial ministry continued to minister under the Old Testament pattern while mainly concentrating on Israel. Nevertheless, this ministry as well envisioned a future planned Mission to the nations. Jesus’ optimistic reaction to the faith of Gentiles and his teachings prefigure that Mission is to be instated with the accomplishment of redemption and the coming of the Spirit.

### **2.8.3 Gentiles and the Kingdom mission**

Jesus had anticipated that the day would come when other people from east and west, and from north and south would come and be included in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:29), which is a clear inclusion of Gentiles. This vital truth shows that the kingdom will not anymore be limited to the people of Israel, but will rather be comprised of peoples of all nations, tribes, and cultures professing faith in Jesus. Likewise, Luke 14 recounts an incident whereby someone comments to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God" (v. 15). Jesus then replies by telling a parable of a great banquet which represents the Kingdom where invited guests all have excuses not to come. Therefore, the host sends his servants to go to the highways and compels others to come (vv 16-24). This idea of compelling others to come to the banquet may well mean that Jesus' Mission was as well intended to the people of other faiths, the Gentiles, who were beyond the borders of Israel. The parable of the wicked tenants in Matthew conveys a related message that ends with, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit (Matt. 21:43)." A people who will produce its fruits, can be suggested to refer to the Gentiles who were considered to be far in terms of faith in God, from the people of Israel.

### **2.8.4 The Great Commission**

Jesus gave the Great Commission only after he had accomplished the redemption of humanity through his death and resurrection. The disciples were given a clear command to bring the gospel to the nations. This was to usher in the new age of the Spirit of God for Mission. Indeed, when investigating some of the exceptional features of the various formulations of the Great Commission in the four Gospels, it is explicit that the foundational command for evangelism in the world is in Matthew 28:18-20. The Mission of the church in the world is to make disciples, baptise them, and bring them into the fellowship of believers.

The ministry of evangelism was not carried out by only a chosen few but by ordinary believers as well in reaching out to the people of other faiths (Acts 8:4). The significant message that the early church announced was Jesus Christ (Acts 8:5, 12, 35, 9:20; 11:20). Furthermore, disciples took the message beyond the Jewish border and crossing dogmatic cultural barriers (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 8:12; 10:48; 11:24; 13:48; 14:1,21) (Penney 2001: 63-64). Jesus calls all those who believe in him to engage all people in reaching out to the people of other faiths of the world today by means of stepping out of their comfort zones. Christians ought to build relationships with others who are not like them; it is essential as well when doing Mission to people of other faiths to be sensitive to the cultural differences. Visiting missionaries that can offer tips on how to share the gospel to Muslims, Hindus and others, can do this (Penney, 2001 :142). It is also important to note that this is notwithstanding the difficulties and opposition that would lie in the way. Indeed, the Apostles performed their commanded Mission with diligence and loyalty (Lawless and Greenway 2010: 288).

Additionally, it is essential to note that the Bible emphasises God's plan of salvation for all people of all times. God the creator of humanity knows and cares for people of each generation and culture and has great love, understanding, and compassion for them all. Paul's plan to "become all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:22) is clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is of no doubt that if God had not been a missionary God, all of the people on earth would have been lost. Yet God was more than willing to pay the price to bring about reconciliation with lost humanity which includes people of all tribes, languages and nations, until he comes again (Antonia Leonora Van Der Meert in (Taylor, 2000: 152. David Bosch (1991:1, 8-11) points out that the Christian faith sees all generations of the earth as objects of God's plan of salvation.



During Jesus' life and ministry in Israel, it is clearly seen that his love was for all nations and that he was working to break through the disciples' biases and prepare them for worldwide ministry. He showed special care for Gentiles and Samaritans and he referred to them regularly and respectfully in his personal contacts, teaching, and parables. Actually, before Jesus left his disciples, he commanded them to reach all the nations and this was unmistakably clear. Furthermore, the book of Acts shows us how the Holy Spirit came with the particular purpose of enabling the church and individual believers to witness to all the nations. It is amazing how he broke through the bias that was still present (Acts 1:8; 10; 11; 15), and how he began to incorporate Gentiles into God's kingdom. However, the book of Acts shows how God uses ordinary human beings to accomplish his purposes. Indeed, the epistles and Revelation are written out of a missionary practice to churches on the "Mission field." Therefore it can be seen that the entire Bible plainly and consistently discloses the same messages (Taylor 2000: 151).

According to Norberto Saracco in (Taylor, 2000:364), on Mission to the world, he notes that on thinking about a gospel for all people, it said that:

- The universal character of the Christian faith and the confession of the Lordship of Christ give its missionary dimension to the church.
- All the church is responsible for evangelising all people, races, and tongues.
- The missionary vision, action, and reflection of the church must be founded on the gospel, which, when understood in its entirety, is proclaimed in word and deed and is directed to every human being.
- The Holy Spirit has developed a new missionary awareness.
- Incarnation is the model for the crossing of geographical, cultural, social, linguistic, and spiritual frontier.

It is as explicit that when Jesus commissioned his Apostles, he commanded them to go and teach all nations and to preach the gospel to every creature. Therefore, those who care for Christ's kingdom are now certain that the evangelisation of Muslims is not only possible but is a certainty and that the talk about the impossibility of reaching Muslim or people of other faiths is utterly baseless and has been confuted by a contrary fact in almost all countries several times (Penney 2001: 82). In other words, since God wants Muslims to respond and all other people groups of other faiths, they will do so (ibid). The intentionality of the gospel is to spread into all the nations of the earth prior to the end of the age (Matt, 28:19) and it is guaranteed to happen. It is for this reason that, it is to this end that the Spirit is given in order to facilitate worldwide witness (Acts 1:8). Consequently, Gregory Leffel (Snyder 2001: 89) mentions that, churches in the mode of Mission in Acts 1:8, bring colour to the apostolate. They do this by proposing the various frames in which the church is to live and conduct its Mission which should start from Jerusalem, the home-front; Judea, the nation; Samaria. Further, Snyder (2001: 221) affirms that the gospel is an announcement of "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14). It is good news to all creation, to all people and nations, to the completely earthly environment and to the whole cosmos, which is according to the researcher the claim of the Bible.

#### ***2.8.4.1 The Mission of the Great Commission***

It is explicit that at the centre of the Great Commission, which Jesus gave to His disciples, is the imperative command to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). Looking at the text of this commission grammatically, it is informative to note that the main verb "make disciples" used here is imperative; while the terms "go," "baptise," and "teach" are participles unfolding and having commanding force that is connected with the imperative "make disciples." The command includes more than a mere assertion. "Go" emphasises that the task comprises a deliberate taking of the message of the kingdom to the nations. On the

one hand, baptism, which goes along with repentance and faith, is the means by which a person is openly initiated into the new kingdom community, on the other hand it is followed by the teachings to obey all that Jesus commanded. It is important to note that after baptism, all of Jesus's teachings are binding for the disciples; one does not have the choice to pick and decide on a few. Evidently, making disciples includes calling people to accept Jesus as the Lord, surrendering every aspect of their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### ***2.8.4.2 Mission scope of the Great Commission***

The scope of the Great Commission takes us back to the centripetal Mission of the Old Testament, which is now clearly inverted. "Go" unveils the centrifugal movement of Mission to all nations of the earth. According to the researcher, the command is not just to make disciples of individual persons, rather, it is to disciple nations of the world. This is a truly unbelievable suggestion that would border on the outrageous were it not for the accompanying power and promise of the risen Christ, who gives the commission to His disciples.

#### ***2.8.4.3 Mission promise of the Great Commission***

The Great Commission, and the Gospel of Matthew itself, closes with a reassuring and encouraging promise of Jesus' lasting presence (28:20). This same Jesus, to whom all authority is given, promises as well to go with the disciples on their intimidating Mission of making disciples of all nations. It is significant to all Christians in their endeavour to take the gospel to people of other faiths in order to note the comprehensiveness of Jesus' statements in this Great Commission: all authority, all nations, all that He commanded, who is always with them to the end of the age (Matt. 28:18-19).

#### ***2.8.4.4 Mission duration of the Great Commission***

The duration of the Great Commission's promise is linked to the very end of the age. This is an explicit promise which indicates that the commission is to go on until Jesus' second coming when this era comes to an end. The commission fills the period between Jesus' two comings, ushering in the end of salvation history. Thus, it is only when the gospel has been proclaimed to every nation of planet earth, that the world will end (Matt. 24:14).

#### **2.8.5 Mission in the Gospel of Matthew**

Moreover, in the formation of the Great Commission in the book of Matthew, Matthew concludes that the Gospel must be comprehended together with the opening of the Gospel. Thus, the opening verses of Matthew start with the genealogy of Jesus with Abraham and David. The call of Abraham is the beginning of God's specific work through a specific people, which had a worldwide intention. However, Matthew completes His Gospel with the commissioning of disciples of all nations. Jesus completed the work of redemption by making it possible for the fulfillment of the universal intention that the gospel be brought to all nations of the world. This is in reference to Abraham in Matthew chapter 1 and in reference to all nations in chapter 28, which forms the end of this Gospel and encloses the whole ministry of Christ in this light. Indeed, many New Testament scholars perceive Matthew 28:18 as the important to understanding the whole book of Matthew (Köstenberger and O'Brien 2001: 87).

#### **2.8.6 Mission authority of the Great Commission**

Jesus' words in Matthew begin with, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). The Lord of the universe gives a universal commission. These words certainly recall the Prophet Daniel's words concerning the "Son of Man" (Jesus): "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power as all nations and peoples of every language

worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14).

#### **2.8.7 Luke: The Salvation historical significance of the Great Commission**

Luke’s account (24:44-45) is entrenched in a resurrection appearance description. In the first place, Jesus associates the preaching of the gospel with salvation history by describing how “Moses, the prophets and the Psalms” in the Old Testament bear witness to him (v. 44). Luke then proceeds into his account of the Great Commission with the words, “Thus it is written” (v. 46a NKJV), showing that the work of salvation and the preaching to all nations is in continuity with biblical disclosure.

#### **2.8.8 The Message of the Great Commission**

Luke’s description of the Great Commission is shown as he gives the account of Jesus’s instruction to the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Father clothes them in power (24:49). He makes it explicit that the given command does not simply create instant marching orders. Relatively, the disciples were to wait for the coming of the Spirit. It is only after they had received the power of the Holy Spirit and the age was fully initiated, that the spread of the gospel to the nations began in earnest. This is also a noticeable theme in Acts, where the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit is repeated (Acts 1:8), and the actual receiving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost launched the New Testament Mission as seen in Acts chapter 2, hence, the spreading of the gospel to the nations is constantly driven by the movement of the received Spirit. With this, the reception of the Spirit is power enabling the disciples to spread the gospel in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mission starts to move out from Jerusalem to other nations of the world.

Thus, it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. In addition,

behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high (Lk 24:46-49).

Moreover, it is clear that Luke's whole comprehension of the Christian Mission, is the fulfillment of biblical promises. This only became possible after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and its crucial thrust is the message of repentance and forgiveness. It is envisioned for all nations of the whole planet earth; to start from Jerusalem. It is to be implemented by witnesses, and it will be consummated in the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, these fundamentals set up the strengths of Luke's Mission theology, which runs through both the gospel and Acts. The manner in which Luke presents the entirety of his message, is the form of a fact and a promise; as such the words of Christ at the end of the gospel correspond to what he says in the beginning of Acts (1:8) (Bosch 2011: 92).

### **2.8.9 Mission in the Gospel of John**

According to Marthin Erdmann (in Larkin Jr & Williams 1998: 206-208) the Gospel is primarily intended to be evangelistic and missionary, with the specified purpose: "these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name." (20:31). The passage by John (20:30-31) purposefully appears to be aimed at nonbelievers who want to make a decision about the identity of Christ Jesus. John's Gospel is mainly focused towards nonbelievers in order to move them to the faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. In the same manner, John's Gospel is explicit that God is the centre of Mission; it is God who so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son (3:16). While God is depicted as the centre of Mission, Jesus is shown to be the focus of Mission (Köstenberger and O'Brien 2001: 203).

John's (3:17); Gospel perspective as to the reason why Christ was sent is clear, it was to save the world to perform everything in accordance with God's will. to accomplish God's Mission. This includes believing in the one whom God sent (6:29); to declare what he heard

from God to the entire world (8:26; 12:47-50) and in that manner, it makes God known to the entire world (17:25-26). In the same way, Jesus was sent to the whole world, he sent his disciples out to the world as he was also sent by God as well. Jesus sent them with a clear Mission, to make God known to the world in the similar manner He Himself did, giving glory to God and informing the world what they learned through Christ who sent them. This same Mission remains for Christians today to take the Gospel of Christ to the people of other faiths of the world.

#### **2.8.10 Mission: Being sent as Jesus was sent**

John's version of the Great Commission sheds a deep new light with the words in (20:21b) "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you". Whereas the formulation in the other Gospels stresses the proclamation of the Gospel, John's design is wider and in some ways more central. This same word is also found in Jesus' prayer in John 17:18, where Jesus talks about sending the disciples "into the world." His prayer is not only for the original disciples but also for those who will believe through their message (17:20). The disciple's unity was to convince the world to believe that Jesus was sent by the Father (17:21). They were sent by Jesus. Andreas J. Köstenberger's (1998, 210) conclusion in the study of Mission in the Gospel according to John, says, "The fourth evangelist conceived of the Mission of the Christian community as ultimately the Mission of the exalted Jesus which was carried out through his followers." Jesus did tell his disciples that after his departure they would perform greater work than his own (14:12). This is perhaps not in reference to the miracles that the disciples may potentially execute; but rather, the "greater works" are the outcome of Jesus's finished work of salvation to the Gentiles. Based on their position in salvation history, the disciples will have a greater message to announce, and that message will reach farther than Jesus's earthly ministry (cf. Köstenberger 1998:171-75). These disciples, upon receiving the

Holy Spirit will become witnesses of Jesus (15:26-27). These well equipped disciples are sent to convey Jesus' Mission to the whole world.

Accordingly, the following verses of John 20 similarly expand upon the general view of the whole version of the Great Commission with the words: "And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (vv. 22-23). In the same way, as in Luke, Jesus points out that the disciples were to receive the power from the Holy Spirit for them to fulfill their mandate of the Great Commission. Indeed, the disciples were to become the mediators of God's forgiveness. This forgiveness was completed through the cross of Jesus. Nevertheless, it will be the disciples and the Christian church who will continue with this message and ministry so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, they may mediate this forgiveness to the whole world.

### **2.8.11 Summary**

It is clear that even though each of the formulations of the Great Commission in the Gospels has specific emphases, there are outstanding shared aims from which a deep and harmonious depiction transpires: In each instance, Jesus Himself gives the order. The missionary order is based on His Mission and his word. Mostly, the Great Commission in each instance was involved in sending the disciples into the world, to all nations, or to all creation with the aim of reaching out to the people of other faiths. God's Mission is seen moving out from Jerusalem, beyond the so called "lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). The Mission of the church is as well clearly focused on others, to those yet outside the kingdom of God. This is a worldwide Mission, of extending to every people, nation, and tongue.

Additionally, Jesus Himself is depicted to be at the centre of each formulation: his sending of the disciples, in John; his authority, teaching, and his presence in Matthew. His Mission of redemption and forgiveness in Luke and his name, in which signs are performed



in Mark. The message and the work of the Great Commission are bound together to the person of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the Holy Spirit in Matthew's account, Jesus's long-lasting presence is the provider in each case. In other words, God Himself will provide the power through his own presence doing His Mission worldwide. Each design in which the disciples took up ministry is that which Jesus initiated. In other words, Mission has all the dimensions of the ministry of Jesus. It is evident that the disciple will not have died a substitutionary death for the sinners, as did Jesus. However, they will become intermediaries of salvation that is provided by Jesus in new and more marvellous ways. The disciples were commissioned to preach the good news of Jesus to the entire world, making disciples of all nations, to perform greater works than those that Jesus performed on earth and to minister in power in announcing the finished work of salvation and the forgiveness of sin (John14:12),

Consequently, it is remarkable that the intimate link between the life of Jesus, Mission and the Great Commission creates inescapable conclusions that the missionary mandate is not simply one among the many good things that the church is called to do. It is indeed much more than that. It must incorporate the Mission of the entire church. If there was any good work in the ministry of the disciples; it was due to their relationship with Christ. Their command to ministry is the climax of Christ's teaching, emphasising the importance of his redeeming Mission and these are the commanding orders for the church today as well. the gospel task falls onto Jesus' disciples to take up where he left in his earthly ministry, and to become his representatives of forgiveness and kingdom change in the power of the Holy Spirit. The same understanding of the urgency of the missionary mandate should at once fill the Christian church today in their endeavour to do Mission to the people of other faiths who are within their reach.

## **2.9 MISSION WITNESS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

Luke uses the expression “ends of the earth” (Greek word, *Eschatou tes^es* Acts 1:8) to show the dimension of the spread of the gospel witness of Jesus. This resonates with the Old Testament language of the Prophet Isaiah concerning the role Israel and thereafter, the messianic Servant as a light for the Gentiles. On the other hand, Luke relates the Apostle Paul quoting Isaiah 49:6b, explaining His Mission and the church’s Mission: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47, Gk. *Eschatou tes ges*). The language used in this text similarly recalls the Old Testament teaching of the testimony of the heavens to the Lord’s glory that extends into the entire universe (Ps. 19:4, Bauckham 2003: 103-109). Luke further gives the description of the influence of the kingdom of God that extends to the entire planet earth. However, this expansion of God’s kingdom will be by means, of humble Christian witness.

In Acts 2, the miracle of Pentecost portrays the disciple of Jesus preaching in unlearned languages of their listeners. Evidently, this did not only signal the birth of the Christian church and the investiture of the age of the Holy Spirit, yet also cogently exhibits that they had to overcome the curse of Babel. During this time the language, which the Jewish Pentecost pilgrims knew, was Hebrew, Aramaic, or perhaps Greek or Latin, hence the miracle is for these hearers to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their languages. Indeed, this miracle shows something bigger. The promise of blessings to the nations by Abraham was in the process of fulfillment. It was not necessary for the Gentiles to learn the Jewish language for them to be reached by the Gospel Commission. Nevertheless, the message of God was soon to be brought to the Gentiles in their own languages.

### **2.9.1 The ongoing Mission launching to the nations**

In the launching of the Christian Mission to the nations, it was clear that the disciples were to be careful about over idealising the Mission of the early church. The initiation of

Mission to the Gentiles was to some extent a slow move to start with. This was due to unanticipated events and opposition, which at times the disciples faced. The coming of the promised helper, the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, most quickly made them move out of Jerusalem on Mission to the nations. However, according to Schnabel (2008 and 2004), in examining the events deeper, the chronology discloses that this was not the situation. For instance, the chronology of events were: Pentecost A.D. 30, the Samaritan Mission A.D. 31-32, Paul's Mission in Arabia A.D. 32-33, Paul's Mission in Cilicia and Syria A.D. 33-42, Peter's Mission to the coastal region (Lydda, Sharon, Joppa) AD34, the conversion of Cornelius A.D. 37-41, the persecution of the Apostles and diaspora which lead to the first establishment of predominantly Gentile church in Antioch A.D. 41, the possible departure of the 12 Apostles from Jerusalem into the world A.D. 41-42, Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey A.D. 45-47 and the Jerusalem Council A.D. 48.

Additionally, over time God arranges various situations and moves through various individuals to propel the gospel outward from Jerusalem. Evidently, following the persecution of Stephen, it is explicit that "all except the Apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). Philip, a Hellenistic Jew, takes the gospel to Samaria (Acts 8:4-8):

**Figure 9. The earliest missionary journey (Philip the Evangelist)**



Source: [www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm): *Maps of Paul's missionary Journeys*

From Acts 8:1b-40, it is clear that on the very day when a great storm of persecution burst upon the church in Jerusalem (1 on figure 9) and prompted the stoning of Stephen to death. As a result, all Church members excluding the Apostles were scattered over the countryside of Judea (2 on figure 9) and Samaria (3 on figure 9). While respectful men buried Stephen, and mourned deeply over him, Saul who was later named the Apostle Paul stressed the Church severely. Further, it is noted that those scattered because of this action of persecution went throughout the countryside, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Philip who was the "deacon" and an evangelist, for example, went down to the city of Samaria (4 on figure 9) and preached the good news of Jesus to people.

In the same chapter of Acts, an angel of the Lord came to Phillip and told him to get up and go south down the road which runs from Jerusalem to Giza (5 on figure 9) out of the desert. Philip is again seen explaining the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, who becomes the first African Christian believer (8:26-40). Later on, Phillip finds Himself at Azotus (6 on figure 9); passing through the countryside, he went on telling the good news in all the cities

until he came to Caesarea (7 on figure 9). Saul of Tarsus, a former persecutor of the church and not one of the original 12 Apostles, became the “apostle to the Gentiles” (9:15).

Likewise, Peter who was a Jew was willing to enter the house of the Gentile centurion Cornelius only after a paranormal vision which was repeated three times (10:9-11:18).

As the persecuted Christians reach Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, their understanding of a Gentile Mission was still far off as they were still “telling the message only to Jews” (11:19b). However, believers from Cypress and Cyrene, who seemingly did not know any better, became involved in the establishment of the first mainly Gentile church (11:20-21). The Jerusalem church was originally sceptical of the gospel development and sent Barnabas to probe the integrity of the movement (11:22-23). Consequently, the mainly Gentile church of Antioch became the first church to deliberately send Barnabas and Paul as missionaries to the Gentile world and remained the prime sending centre (13:1-3; 14:26-28; 15:35).

Consequently, figure 4 below shows in detail, the first missionary journey by Paul, where he did His Mission with his companions as from A.D. 45 to 47. The figure was taken from the book Acts 13:4-14:28. This passage provides important information on how Paul and his companion preached the gospel to the believers and to the people of other faiths, the Gentiles.

**Figure 10: Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas.**



*Source: [www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm): Maps of Paul's missionary journeys*

After Barnabas and Saul had been sent by the Holy Spirit, they went from Syrian Antioch (1 on figure 10) to Seleucia (2 on figure 10). From there they sailed to the island of Cyprus. They arrived at Salamis (3 on figure 10) and began to preach God's message at the Jewish meeting places. They also had John as a helper. As they went all the way to the city of Paphos (4 on figure 10) on the other end of the island they met a Jewish man named Bar-Jesus. This man practised witchcraft and was a false prophet. He also worked for Sergius Paulus, a very smart governor of the island. This governor Sergius Paulus wanted to hear God's message, so he sent for Barnabas and Saul to come and share the Word of God with him. But Bar-Jesus, whose other name was Elymas, was against the idea.

He even tried to keep the governor from having faith in the Lord. Saul, better known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit. He looked straight at Elymas (Bar-Jesus) and said, "You Son of the devil! You are a liar, a crook, and an enemy of everything that is right. When will you stop speaking against the true ways of the Lord? The Lord is going to punish you by making you completely blind for a while." Suddenly the man's eyes were covered by a

dark mist, he went around trying to get someone to lead him by the hand. When the governor saw what had happened, he was amazed at this teaching about the Lord. Therefore, he put his faith in the Lord. Paul and the others left Paphos and sailed to Perga (5 on figure 10) in Pamphylia. However, John left them and went back to Jerusalem.

The rest of them went on from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia (6 on figure 10). Then on Sabbath day they went to the Jewish meeting place, sat down and went on to Iconium (7 on figure 10). Moreover, the disciples continued to be full of joy and the Holy Spirit. Much the same thing happened at Iconium. When a hostile movement arose from both Gentiles and Jews in collaboration with the authorities to insult and stone them, they got to know about it, fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and (8 on figure 10) Derbe (9 on figure 10), and the surrounding countryside. From there they continued to proclaim the Gospel. Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, after turning the minds of the people against Paul they stoned him and dragged him out of the city thinking he was dead. Nevertheless, while the disciples were gathered in a circle round him, Paul got up and walked back to the city.

Moreover, the very next day he went out with Barnabas to Derbe, and when they had preached the Gospel to that city and made many disciples, they turned back to Lystra (10 on figure 10), Iconium (11 on figure 10) and Antioch (12 on figure 10). They then crossed Pisidia and arrived in Pamphylia. They proclaimed their message in Perga (13 on figure 10) and then went down to Attalia (14 on figure 10). From there they sailed back to Antioch (in Syria) (15 on figure 10). When they arrived there, they called the Church together and reported to them how greatly God had worked with them and how he had opened the door of faith for the Gentiles. In addition, here at Antioch they spent a considerable time with the disciples.

Similarly, figure 11 below, provides detailed information on the second missionary journey of Paul. It shows areas where he preached the gospel and made many converts, although there were many resistances from the people.

**Figure 11: Paul's second missionary journey**



Source: [www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm): *Maps of Paul's missionary Journeys*

The detailed information on figure 11 is taken from Acts 15:40-18:23a. Paul chose Silas and set out on his journey from Syrian Antioch (1 on figure 11). He travelled through Syria (2 on figure 11) and Cilicia (3 figure 11) and strengthened the churches. He also went to Derbe (4 on figure 10) and Lystra (5 on figure 11). At Lystra there was a disciple by the name of Timothy who was held in high regard by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium, and Paul wanted to take him on as his companion. As they went on their way through the cities they passed on to them for their observance the decisions which had been reached by the Apostles and elders in the Council of Jerusalem. They made their way through Phrygia (6 on figure 11) and Galatia (7 on figure 11) but the Holy Spirit prevented them from speaking God's message in Asia.



When they came to Mysia (8 on figure 11) they tried to enter Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them. So, they passed by Mysia and came down to Troas (9 on figure 5). This is where one night Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man standing and appealing to him in the words: "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" So, they set sail from Troas and ran a straight course to (the island of) Samothrace (10 on figure 11), and on the following day to Neapolis (11 on figure 11). From there they went to Philippi (12 on figure 11), a Roman colony and the major city in that part of Macedonia. They spent some days in Philippi, here Paul and Silas, Timothy and sometimes Luke brought the Gospel to Lydia from Thyatira and were in conflict over a girl with evil spirits, beaten and imprisoned, survived a destructive earthquake and converted the girl. The magistrates released them, but upon learning that Paul was a Roman citizen they apologised and after taking them out of prison, he requested them to leave the city of Philippi.

The following day they journeyed through Amphipolis (13 on figure 11) and Apollonia (14 on figure 11) and arrived at Thessalonica (15 on figure 11). Thessalonica was a major port and like Philippi, was located on the east-west Egnatian highway, which was an important centre of trade by land and by sea. The teachings of Paul and Silas resulted in a large number of the people getting converted, but this also annoyed many Jews. The city was in uproar and immediately the brothers dispatched Paul and Silas off to Beroea (or Berea) (16] on figure 11) that night. Upon their arrival, there they went to the Jewish synagogue. The Jews proved to be more generous than those in Thessalonica for they accepted the message most eagerly. However, when the Jews at Thessalonica found out that Paul at Beroea had proclaimed God's message as well, they went there as well, to cause trouble and spread alarm among the people. The brothers at Beroea then sent Paul off at once to make his way to the seacoast (near Beroea) (16 on figure 11), but Silas and Timothy remained there to continue with the Mission.

The men who accompanied Paul took him as far as Athens (17 on figure 11) and returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy (still in Berea) to rejoin Paul as soon as possible. Paul had some days to wait at Athens for Silas and Timothy to arrive and while there, he addressed some of the many philosophers of Athens, most of whom rejected his teaching. Before long Paul left Athens and went on to Corinth (18 on figure 11) where he found a Jew called Aquila, a native of Pontus. This man had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius the emperor had issued a decree that all Jews should leave Rome. They all worked together for their trade was tent-making. Every Sabbath Paul used to speak in the synagogue trying to persuade both Jews and Greeks. By the time, Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was completely absorbed in preaching the message and showing the Jews as clearly as he could that Jesus was Christ. However, when they turned against him and abused him, he shook his garments at them, and said, "Your blood is on Your heads! From now on I go with a perfectly clear conscience to the Gentiles." He then left them and went to the house of a man called Titius Justus, a man who revered God and whose house was next to the synagogue. Paul settled in Corinth for 18 months which was his second longest recorded stay in a city during his three Missionary Journeys and taught them God's message. Then, while Gallio was governor of Achaia the Jews banded to attack Paul but Gallio flatly refused to be a judge in those matters. Paul stayed for some time (in Corinth) after this incident, took leave of the brothers and sailed to Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

At Cenchrea (19 on figure 11) he had his haircut short for he had taken a solemn vow to do so. They all arrived at Ephesus (20 on figure 11) and Paul left Aquila and Priscilla, but he went into the synagogue and debated about the law and grace with the Jews. When they asked him to stay longer, he refused, bidding them farewell with the words, "If it is God's will I will come back to you again" which he did on his third missionary journey. He then set sail

from Ephesus and went down to Caesarea (21 on figure 11). Here he disembarked and after paying his respects to the Church in Jerusalem (22 on figure 11), he went down to Antioch (23 on figure 11). He spent some time there before he leaving on his third journey (this Bible passage is paraphrased).

**Figure 12: Paul's third missionary journey**



Source: [www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm): *Maps of Paul's missionary Journeys*

The information on figure 6 is taken from Acts 18:23b-20:3a. After Paul spent some time in Syrian Antioch (1 on figure 12), he started on his Third Missionary Journey and proceeded to visit throughout Galatia systematically (2 on figure 12) and Phrygia (3 on figure 12) strengthening all the disciples as he travelled. A Jewish man called Apollos, a native of Alexandria and a gifted speaker and well-versed in the Scriptures, arrived at Ephesus<sup>13</sup>. He began to speak with great boldness in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard

<sup>13</sup> Ephesus is the South of modern Izmir or Smyrna in Western Turkey, and at that time capital of the Roman province of Asia. One of the three greatest cities of the eastern Mediterranean with a population of perhaps 250,000 - the other two being Alexandria in Egypt and Syrian Antioch, Ephesus was an important port with good access to the interior of Asia Minor. As a centre for the worship of Artemis or Diana - the Asian goddess of fertility, her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The great theatre could hold 25,000 people ([www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm): *Maps of Paul's missionary Journeys*).

him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately. Then, as he had wanted to cross into Achaia, the brothers gave him every encouragement and wrote a letter to the disciples there, asking them to make him feel welcome.

While Apollos was in Corinth Paul journeyed through the upper parts of the country which was the high inland plateau of Asia Minor and arrived at Ephesus (4 on figure 12). There he discovered some disciples who he baptises in the Holy Spirit. From there Paul made his way into the synagogue in Ephesus and for three months he spoke with the utmost confidence. However, when some of them hardened in their attitude towards the message and refused to believe it, Paul left them, withdrew his disciples, and held daily discussions in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. He continued this practice for two years. Therefore, all who lived in Asia, not just Ephesus, but also the surrounding country, both Greeks and Jews, heard the Lord's message. Paul continued to preach and heal with such success that a number of those who had previously practised magic publicly burnt their highly prized books. He then went to Macedonia the province that included the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica with two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, while he stayed for a while in Asia. At this point, Paul was now publicly attacked by the many craftsmen whose livelihood depended on the worship of the goddess Diana and a near-riot ensued. However, after this disturbance had died down, Paul sent for the disciples and after speaking encouragingly, he bid them good-bye, and went to Macedonia (5 on figure 12). As he made his way through these districts, he said many heartening words to the people and then went on to Greece (6 on figure 12) where he stayed for three months. During his three months stay in Greece, Paul led and organised a Mission to Illyricum or Dalmatia, the area of the old Yugoslavia.

It is clear that in doing Mission to Gentiles, some of the Apostles like Paul called themselves the Apostles to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8). This apostle's own calling and ministry merged with the Lord's salvation purposes for all the nations of the world. From

the time of Paul's conversion, God revealed to him that his calling to do Mission to the Gentiles was special (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 3:1-10). Further more, the book of Romans is specifically rich with passages that disclose Paul's self-understanding as missionary in the story of God's resolutions to reach all the nations.

Paul's apostleship is seen "to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (1:5). The phrasing "obedience that comes from faith" shows that his mandate was not to be accomplished with a superficial transformation of Gentiles but it included their maturity and growth in Christ Jesus. The allusion to the obedience of faith among the people of the nations is repeated in the closing words of his letter (16:26), hence serving as a key conclusion and showing the significance of the theme to the whole book of Romans. For instance, the apostle writes that the gospel is God's power for salvation, thus "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (1:16). Literally this reflects on his practice as described in Acts during his first preaching in the synagogue and typically after his rejection from the Jews he would move on to preach to the Gentiles. This was a clear indication that the Jew and the Gentile had similarly transgressed and failed to live up to the light that they have been given; hence, all were similarly guilty and reliant upon God's saving grace which was manifest in Christ and applicable by faith (Rom, 1-3). Actually, God has proven his mercy to both Jew and Gentile (9:23-24), certainly, "for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile as the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' (10:12-13).

Moreover, Paul goes on immediately to raise several questions in the same passage of Scripture where he uses rhetorical expressions to stress the urgency of Mission to the people of other faiths: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?" In addition, how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? Moreover, how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" and how can they preach unless they have been sent?."

(10:14-15a). The reasoning is so appealing; that only as the messengers are sent will the people individually be able to called upon the name of the Lord and be saved. Similarly, as Paul and Barnabas were sent out to reach out to the Gentiles by the church of Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), consequently, the same need remained for the sent ones, the missionaries to bring the Gospel of Christ Jesus those who had not heard it and as well to continue to spread it among themselves in reached areas.

It becomes explicit that as the book of Romans ends, Paul came back to the theme of His Mission. In Romans 15:14-21, Paul reveals his self-awareness as an apostle sent to the Gentiles, which was actually, the important understanding of the whole book of Romans. Indeed, Paul was called “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (15:16). Furthermore, Paul went on to make an amazing claim that unfolded his missionary plan. He came to the point of acknowledging that God had worked through him in the power of the Holy Spirit, “from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I had fully preached the Gospel of Christ” (15:19) NASB). Nevertheless, around as far as Illyricum it means other nations were not of the Jewish community. Paul, later on he said that there was no additional place for him in these areas (Rom 15:23). In other words, when Paul mentioned that he had “fully preached the Gospel of Christ” it may have been understood to mean had planted churches in vital towns. He had established a base for the Gospel in the area, was assured that the newly established churches would grow and reach the whole area with the Gospel. However, it is clear that Paul continued to mention that, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Rom. 15:20). He anticipated to reach as far as Spain with the Gospel of Christ (15:24, 28) which was the end of the earth in the ancient

world's eyes. Paul's pioneering aim was to continue reaching out to yet unreached peoples and establish additional multiplying churches, which would continue the same Mission.

Conversely, Paul revealed a flexible and adaptable approach in his missionary methods and lifestyle as exemplified in this often quoted text in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under let the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

It is clear from this passage that Paul's highest goal was to win people of other faiths to Christ. Similarly, for Paul, "Winning cannot refer to only the conversion of these people of other faiths since there is mention of the same chapter in verse 22 that his aim was as well winning the "weak". Paul's objectives in winning Jews, Gentiles and weak Christians was to labour for their full maturity in Christ, hence this signifies winning them completely (Köstenberger and O'Brien 2001: 181).

In other words, Paul is saying two things here; that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is envisioned for all, without any distinction and that he is under inevitable duty to try to win as many souls as possible for Christ. Specifically, for this purpose Paul maintains that no needless stumbling blocks should be put in the way of potential converts or of weak believers, for example in 1 Corinthians 8-10 where Paul disputes the case about eating or not eating meat offered to idols. In affirming this argument Bosch, indicates that it is not necessary for Christians from different backgrounds to become carbon copies of one another (2011: 138). In other words, those who do Mission to people of other faiths should not try to change the people they have won to Christ, but to let them allow God to change them because God is able to do what the Christian witness cannot do at all.

### **2.9.2 The universalism Mission of Paul**

Paul's universal Mission is the preaching and proclamation of Christ's Lordship over all reality and an invitation for people to submit to it. He wishes to evoke the confession that Jesus is Lord among the unreached people (Rom 10:9; 1Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11). The gospel to be shared is that the reign of God is present in Jesus Christ, and has brought all people together under judgement and has in the same way brought all people together under the grace of God. Thus, the Apostle Paul is commissioned to enlarge His Mission which is already in this world that is the dominion of God's coming world (Bosch 2011: 151).

Paul states explicitly in Romans 1:5 that His Mission and calling are for the name of Christ among all the nations, "We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations." (John Piper in Winter and Hawthorne 2009: 67-68).

### **2.9.3 The Great Commission as Pauline Mission**

The Great Commission for Paul is a clear mandate and commands from the Gospels to evangelise and disciple the nations. It is also this passion for Mission that is apparent in the life and ministry of Paul. Examining most of Paul's letters, he appears to take for granted that the very reason of the gospel commission and the moving of the Holy Spirit must constrain the church to undertake Mission apart from any further clear commands.

In summary, the arguments by Robert Plummer (2006: 78) and others reveal a sort of Pauline Great Commission. They establish the expected multiplication of once established churches as depicted in Romans 15:19. It is presumed that the churches were active in the spreading of the faith as in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is clear that the churches seemingly understood their given responsibility of doing Mission to the people of other faiths. Paul clearly speaks of the need for Christian believers being sent to proclaim the gospel to those who have not heard it (Rom 10:14-15). He further concludes his ministry of reconciliation by



saying that “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God was making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (1Cor 5:20). Paul using the preposition “we” ultimately comprises Christian believers in general who are ready and willing to be preachers of reconciliation to those who have not known the saving power of Jesus Christ. In this case, Paul explicitly presents Himself as an example to the believers. This would be seen in his natural inclusion concern for evangelism and Mission to the Gentiles, as indeed, he urges believers to imitate him in his ministry (1Cor 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:7).

Additionally, Paul in Philippians 1:14-18, describes people, who because of his imprisonment were “encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (v. 14). However, some were preaching Christ for malicious motives; but Paul rejoiced that all the same Christ was mentioned to the nations. He says concerning the Philippian “partnership in the gospel” (Phil. 1:5), they are “contending as one man for the faith of the gospel” (1:27; cf. v. 30), and he describes their responsibility to “hold out the word of life” (2:16) in a lively proclamation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul goes on to discuss the spiritual warfare in his letter to the Ephesians, exhorting the disciples to put on the shoes of the gospel of peace and to take up the sword of the Spirit, that is the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-17). In other words, the believer is to be ready to present the gospel with confidence and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian believers are commissioned to share the gospel in the expected manner with the people of other faiths. He urges the believers: “Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let Your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Col 4:5-6). This is an important exhortation, especially when sharing the gospel with Muslims. Christians should be wise in how they present themselves before the people of other faiths, knowing that they are of

different faiths from them and that they are attempting to share the message of salvation in a winsome and effective way. Paul in writing this writes as a missionary to Mission churches, frequently addressing a challenge that the young churches were facing in doing Mission to nonbelievers. His concern was that these churches grow as communities reflecting kingdom values. Paul's letters serve as an evident call to Mission and further as witnesses to what kingdom communities can and should look like in terms of doing God's commissioned Mission to others. Through such kingdom communities the gospel will both be personified and advance to the ends of the earth (Ott, Strauss, & Tennent 2010: 50).

## **2.10 THE CHURCH LIVES IN THE MISSIONAL TRAIL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TODAY**

In the book of Acts, Luke finishes his writing with no conclusion or summary statement. It ends abruptly. In his last few statements Paul makes it clear to his listeners that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and he is fully convinced that they will listen to it and be saved as well (Acts 28:28). In reading the end of the book, Paul is mentioned as proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God under house detention in Rome (v. 31). Köstenberger and O'Brien comment on this that:

Finally, the open-ended conclusion of the book seeks to draw the readers in to identify with the powerful advance of the gospel of salvation, and to include them in the continuing task of spreading this word. The apostolic testimony did not reach the ends of the earth with Paul's arrival in Rome. This open-endedness is a reminder of the unfinished task and encouragement to all of us as readers to be committed to the ongoing Mission Dei'' (2001: 157).

In establishing methodology for doing Mission, the four Gospels, Acts and the Epistles do not explicitly spell out specific details of any method of Mission. There is no specific method through which the gospel is proclaimed and churches are established. Caution must be taken in attempting to make the book of Acts into a step-by-step handbook for Mission to be duplicated in detail. Perhaps Luke understood this danger. On the same

point, Bauckham (2003: 92) says “the Bible does not map out for us the path from Pentecost to the kingdom. It invites our trust in God rather than mastery of calculation of history. As we should certainly have learned from the biblical story; there will be both shocks and surprises.”, What is seen in this book of Acts is the image of a movement of God’s Spirit centred in his people, Mission, and the message of Jesus. There are recurrent themes found, underlying values discovered and there is an observable course of how God was moving in and by the Christian church into the world.

The church of today is to live in same course of doing Mission. In other words, this shades an ongoing light to live in the movement from Pentecost to Jesus’ return; from spreading the gospel in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth to the New Jerusalem. Finally, from a few Jewish disciples to a people from every nation of the world. In essence, this means to continue to live under the authority of the disciples’ teaching, living as a kingdom people in a hostile world of sin, but still continuing to be the salt and the light of the same world. It means to continue serving in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, it means to continue persistently pioneering the frontiers and moving forward in doing Mission until the good news of the gospel has reached the utmost corners of the earth and the Lord Jesus Christ is recognised among every people of the world.

### **2.10.1 Mission consummation**

In establishing the basis of doing Mission to people of other faiths, the New Testament, and specifically the book of Revelation closes this section of the Bible not only in pulling back the drape on the history unfolding at the end of time, but also by presenting us with a book which focuses on worship. This is where the centre of adoration is Jesus, the Lamb of God, surrounded by angelic creatures and by those who have been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lamb. John writes, “You were slain, and with Your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe, language, people and nations” (Rev. 5:9). This shows that the

Mission of redemption on the cross of Calvary was and will not be in vain. Indeed, the promise of the blessing and salvation reaching the nations will definitely happen. This is affirmed by John where he says it in echoes from Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9, that “you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). Actually, this serves as a conclusion of the Mission of Christ, for this is an affirmation that he will be infinitely adored.

Moreover, the book of Revelations graphically shows the final victory of God over all sin and the founding of the perfect kingdom. This book shows that the witnesses of Jesus’ kingdom are portrayed to be in conflict with the kingdom of the world called Babylon. It is explicit that from the beginning to the end, Jesus’ witnesses expect oppression and suffer fierce persecution. It was not until Christ’s arrival as ultimate judge and King, that the powers of evil were finally thwarted. It is and it will be unfortunate that those who have chosen to adore the beast and reject Christ and his Kingdom will share the destiny for the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10-15). The eternal result will be dependent upon the response of the people to the message of Jesus’ witnesses. Hence, this gives a burden of urgency and finality to the Mission of Christian church.

Additionally, the same final book of the Bible, describes the picture of the New Jerusalem appearing as the centre of the kingdom of God in the new creation. This will be a place of endless glory and worship in the presence of God (Rev 21:22). In essence, the centripetal Mission of the Old Testament which developed to centrifugal and decentralised Mission in the New Testament becomes once again centripetal in the consummation. Indeed, the Old Testament eschatological vision of all the nations coming to a new Zion is seen fulfilled, however, it could not have been completed without the Mission being decentralised and diffused to the nations in the age of the New Testament.

### **2.10.2 Mission as Missio Dei**

God's Mission concern for people of the whole world is that they may be saved, which is also to be the scope of the *missio Dei*. This affects all people in all aspects of their being. This is as well the reason why Mission is God's turning to the world in reverence of formation, care, redemption, and consummation. Hence, this takes place in normal human history, not completely in and through the church but through the Mission of God which is in essence greater than the Mission of the church. The *missio Dei*, is God's Mission activities of reaching the lost people of God. It embraces both the church and the world in which humanity inhabits and in which the church of God is privileged to take part (Bosch 2011: 400-401).

### **2.10.3 Conclusion**

In examining God's plan for the nations in both the Old and New Testament, it has been revealed that God's universal intention is to bring the fallen human beings back to his eternal fellowship and under his supremacy through the specific calling of individuals and people. These individuals became God's intermediaries of his blessing, which outspreads to all the nations of the earth. The Centripetal was a more particular Mission applied by Israel, as it emphasised living as God's kingdom people among the nations and hence drawing them to become worshipers of God. Further, God had unfolded that in the future he would include the nations as part of his people and would one day send heralds to the farthest places to gather people from every nation to Himself in Zion. Although Israel failed as the Servant of God, nevertheless, the Messiah will come as the light to the nations and accomplish his redemption promise (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010: 53).

It is clear that with the New Testament, the vision of redemption was inaugurated in an unexpected way. In other words, not only was Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah who purchased humanity's salvation on the cross, but he began a movement of the Spirit that

overturned the missionary direction, sending his people to the ends of the earth, calling people everywhere to repent, and to be reconciled to God through Christ and to enter the kingdom of God. This was to be a new chosen people who would be composed of persons from every nation. God's people would become a spiritual temple as a dwelling place of the Spirit, manifesting his Kingdom in word and action. The church progressively continued in connection with Israel's calling as a true Servant of the Lord and a light to all nations.

However, as the church was faced with persecution and spiritual opposition, it was explicit that Jesus would build his church until the gospel had been preached among every person on earth as a witness. Jesus will return victoriously to finally judge the evil world and gather his people from all nations to adore him for all eternity in the New Jerusalem. The eschatological vision will be realised, and God will be glorified in all creation (Ott, Strauss, & Tennent 2010: 54). This means that all people of the earth will come finally together to worship God. It is now the Mission of a Christian church to put more effort in reaching out to the peoples of other faiths as preparation for the coming great day of the Lord's soon return.

## **2.11 Theological basis of Mission to people of other faiths**

### **2.11.1 The Shifting scene of theology of Mission**

According to Barrett, whereas the number of Christians has increased threefold since the commencement of the century, the number of Muslims has as well increased fourfold (1990:27). In most Western countries, liberty of religion has a high premium, which enables all faiths to propagate their beliefs freely; but in several Islamic countries the propagation of the Christian faith is prohibited with significant penalties for the Christian Mission. Indeed, Christians in the West have been forced out in certain situations. In the case of African nations, it is also not easy to do Mission in some Muslim communities, as to some extent it is

prohibited, while there is still some freedom for one to practice their own faith, without any interference with people of other faiths.

All these conditions have caused the Christian church to be faced with exceptional challenges. For instance, the Christian church in the South Coast of Kenya, among the Digo tribe folk Muslims, has taken long to propagate the gospel within their Muslim communities, where 99 percent of them follow Islam. It is probably in order to suggest that due to these circumstances, the Christian church has reached a point where they say that there is little doubt that the two greatest unsettled problems for the church today are its correlation. Firstly, to the worldviews about the offer of this worldwide redemption, which is only in Jesus Christ; and secondly, to other faiths. On the first point, it is noteworthy, that Christians are confronted with the question whether Christianity is definitely something uniquely important, that is something exceptional. It is clear, looking at what is happening in the religious realms, that to come up with a conclusion that the challenge of religions is more significant than that of worldly beliefs. The church should focus more on the relationship between Mission and world, particularly how best Mission can be done to those who have not been reached with the Gospel of Jesus. The church needs to follow biblical strategies in doing Mission to people who are different from them, in terms of culture and beliefs

The big question remains among the Christian communities, which surround the people of other faiths especially the Muslims; as to whether the Christians are well equipped to respond to the great challenge that arises from the religions. It is becoming more complex with no particular theology which any expert could even begin to take up the challenge posed to the Christian churches by the people from other faiths, especially in this case, the Muslims. The Christians seem to be unprepared with their methodology of Mission to the people of other faiths. There is much confusion and uncertainty that prevails in doing Mission to the Muslims. For instance, living in the South Coast of Kenya and in charge of Adventist Muslim

relation (AMR) among the Muslim communities. They are filled with hostility and ready to fight in the name Allah, Most Christians live in fear and confusion, they seem not to know why God has placed them where they are, and what the best methods are to use to better respond to the challenge of sharing the gospel with the Muslims. Thus, it either is clear that the entire area of Missiology is almost unknown in theological institutions or demoted to the position of an insignificant subset of pastoral theology (Bosch 2011: 488).

### **2.11.2 The theologies on people of other faiths**

Bevans, Schroeder, and Schroeder indicate that a study of Acts confirms that the church only comes to be as it understands and accepts Mission anywhere and everywhere in the world (2004:10). Acts begins with a community of disciples, which sees itself as the true Israel, a kind of spiritual and religious movement from which the supremacy of God will be manifest. However, as Acts unfolds, the community of disciples gradually begins to realise that something else is going on as the Spirit leads it to include Samaritans who are known as the half-Jews. This also applies to the individual Gentile proselytes like the Ethiopian eunuch, praiseworthy Gentiles (Burke 2013:2), Cornelius and his household, of which Acts presents as the first Gentile to be baptised into the Christian community (Acts 10:1; 11:18), and, finally, Gentiles in Antioch.

It is clear that even though the Mission to the Jews did not cease, it became apparent that the future of Mission was going to be not only to the Jews, but to the whole world. Bevan, Schroeder, and Schroeder (2004) argue that although the word “church” was sometimes used to designate the community in Acts (for instance, 5:11; 8:1, 4; 9:31), the disciples certainly did not fully recognise themselves as “church.” Thus, a separate entity from Judaism, until they came to understand that they were called to a Mission that had as its scope, “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The church was born only as the community of the disciples of Jesus slowly realised that they were called beyond themselves to all people, until



the “full number of the Gentiles enter in” (Rom 11:25), which can be termed theologically as people of other faiths other than Jews, who were known to be God’s chosen people (Deut. 14:2).

Johnson (1987:5) expresses that the book of Romans as a whole gives the impression that Paul’s readers were predominantly Gentile in origin. He explains His Mission as one of bringing about “the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all nations (Gentiles), including yourselves” (1:5-6; 16:26). He continues to say that he had wanted to “reap some harvest among you as among the rest of the Gentiles” (1:13). Paul further emphasises that, “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles.” (Rom 11:13).

Johnson points out that contemporary readers, both Christian and Jewish, rarely notice how much more sustained the polemic of the New Testament was with respect to the Gentile world than with respect to Judaism. Hence, the preferred target was the Gentile religion. He continues to say:

In this regard, the writers of the New Testament aligned themselves completely on the side of Judaism, which had already developed forms of polemics against pagan religion that were at least the equal of the fierce Gentile anti-Semitism directed against the Jews. The prophets of ancient Israel had long mocked the polytheism of their neighbouring Gentiles, attacking their worship as idolatry (2009:2).

However, during Jesus’s own ministry, the Jewish authorities knew that some non-Jews had already put Jews to shame. One example is that of the centurion from Capernaum who surprised Jesus and caused him to cry out, “I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this.” (Matt 8:10, GNB). The Canaanite woman’s conduct prompted Jesus to say: “O woman, great is Your faith!” (Mt 15:28, NKJV). According to the researcher, the Gentiles were occasionally portrayed as substitute guests at the eschatological banquet. It is clear that people will come from the east, west, north and south and take their places at the banquet, while “those who were born to the kingdom” will be thrown out (Mat 8:11-13, NEB; cf. Lk 13:28-30). Bosch says that Jews are, in the metaphoric language of the parable

of the great banquet, the guests who have rejected the invitation on the basis of incredibly fragile excuses and now have to look on while the Gentiles take their places. They do not do so because of any merit such that Gentiles may have, but simply because they have responded positively (1991:30-31).

Wilson (2002:112) says that Judaism, when compared to Christianity, has a more optimistic view of the created world and of human beings. Judaism has no doctrine of original sin. According to Ucko (1994:60), the Jewish people have a major role in their salvation. Israel as a nation was expected to contribute to salvation. It was not just to remain a spectator; it was to be prepared to take part in salvation. On the eve of the exodus from Egypt, that was precisely what they did. Ucko (1994: 60-62) further says that salvation

.... is not primarily a deliverance from sin and sinfulness and a fallen world or an antidote to original sin.... Salvation means being set free to be involved in this earth, because there is no other world at hand than this earth, part of God's creation .... The aim of salvation is the creation of a holy people in which righteousness and peace will dominate and where the salvation can be enacted as an expression of an intact community with God."

Habgood (1992: vii), in his compilation of essays titled *Many Mansions: Interfaith and Religious Tolerance* shows correctly the changed situation of religions in the world in the third millennium. He wrote:

Other faiths used to belong to other lands. At home rival religious claims could safely be ignored, patronised. The superiority of one's own faith was so evident that the alternatives could somehow be brought within its purview without posing any real theological or social threat. Today things are different. Different faiths are practised cheek by jowl in most parts of the world.

Kärkkäinen (2009:18) indicates those other religions, which used to be distant from the presence of Christians, have come much closer, whether the individuals live in the West or elsewhere in the world. He points out that theology no longer limits the consideration of theological topics to the Christian sphere; the questions and answers posed by other religions must be taken into account. Alan Race (1984:89) also writes:

Can Christianity maintain its traditional hold on being the one true absolute religion, intended for all mankind, if it also recognises authentic and sincere faith in other guises? If Christ represents the only true way to God, then what do Christians say of other faiths, many of which are older than Christianity itself? How do Sikhs or Buddhists accord with the purposes of God viewed through Christian eyes? ....

Wilson (2002:112) argues for greater communication with people of other faiths, saying Christians may need to embark on the following methods. First, they have to get to know people of other faiths and accept them as neighbouring faith communities. Secondly, they need to familiarise themselves with their religions to the extent possible in order to share their own faith. Thirdly, they need to let the understanding of religions of others affirm, challenge, and transform their own religious vision. Finally, they need to engage in suitable witnessing, cooperation, and realisation/articulation of truth.

Smith defines Islam to mean total surrender to God. It is surrender to the omnipotent Allah, one who has to be respected and revered. The Qur'an, the Holy book of Islam, also describes Allah to be a God of compassion and mercy, qualities that are cited 192 times in the Qur'an (1991: 237). Despite the fact that Allah is omnipotent, humanity is awarded with sufficient freedom and responsibility to make genuine moral and spiritual decisions. People are thus responsible for their own sin and other moral shortcomings. Hence, the last judgement and the separation to heaven and hell are important in the instruction of the Qur'an. Islam as a religion stresses the individuality of the self. They say that the value, virtue, and potential of this individuality should be accepted and developed. Muslims believe that God is an individual and as such is unique. This individuality of the human soul is everlasting; for once it is created, it never dies. Christianity and Islam to some extent share this fundamental belief (Wilson 2002:114).

Devout Muslims exercise total dependence on God and have concern for one's neighbour, especially for people who are poor and in need. Islam's belief in final judgement and accountability is commonly shared with Christianity. However, the role of Jesus Christ is

a separating issue between the two religions. In the two faiths, the fundamental difference between them is in the understanding of God. In Islam, Allah is Al-Rahman al-Rahim who is known as the merciful Lord of mercy. Allah simply forgives out of Allah's sovereign competence. Thus, the role and place of Jesus is different for Muslims and Christians. Cragg (1980: 161) explains the position of Islam on Jesus as follows: Jesus' death on the cross "did not happen in essence because it need not happen soteriologically. The intrusion of any Saviour or saviourhood is simply redundant, superfluous, irrelevant, and to think it necessary is to impugn the divine adequacy as forgiver. The omnipotent needs no 'assistant.' The Cross-further should not happen, because substitution or vicarious atonement is immoral. Evil is not transferable."

In spite of this dividing wall between Christianity and Islam, both accept Jesus as a prophet to some extent, which is the belief that binds the two religions together more than any other World Religions. The re-evaluation of the function of prophet, function of Scriptures, cultural training, and the hermeneutical ideologies that are used by each of the faiths definitely provides some perception into the connection that may be developed in the future search for a better relationship. Both Islam and Christianity have sufficient records of atrocities that were carried out in the name of their respective religions. With both Christianity and Islam, historically, creative theologians were not always welcome, but rather often persecuted by the hierarchy in the name of truth (Wilson 2002:114). Wilson (2002:114-115) emphasises that

Westernisation and Arabisation of several communities around the world, introduced along with the respective faiths, are under scrutiny to broaden the horizons of these faiths especially outside their historical areas. In the changing environment, it is important that common ground is recognised, religious roots going back to Abrahamic tradition are reevaluated without resorting to exclusivistic interpretations. New voices of solidarity between both religious traditions are encouraged.

Hinduism as a religious faith focuses primarily on how to get rid of the slavery of ignorance (*avidya*) about identity. The Hindus' goal of salvation is to attain final deliverance (*moksha*) from the life cycle (*samsara*). Their faith does not focus on the accumulative of religious knowledge. In Hinduism, when a person wants to progress in the pathway of *moksha* which is also known as deliverance or total spiritual consciousness or salvation, the possibilities of a plurality is within (Wilson 2002:115). The way the Hindus deal with the issue of plurality is by realising and correctly addressing the individual's diverse spiritual types. According to Hinduism, people can be categorised into four spiritual types. Smith (1991: 28) outlines them as follows: "Some people are primarily reflective. Others are basically emotional. Still others are essentially active. Finally, some are experimentally inclined."

In Hinduism, there are prescribed paths, which personalities can follow to obtain the goal of salvation. However, all four paths are obligated to abide by the primary moral teachings. According to this faith, the basic doctrine of these teachings is the restriction of selfishness. Lippner (1994: 234) affirms "The liberation from *samsara* is attained only by a selfless morality rather than by a karmic ethic of reward and punishment." Hence, Smith (1998: 29) states that this moral teaching, "involves the cultivation of such habits as non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, self-control, cleanliness, contentment, self-discipline, and a competing desire to reach the goal."

The four paths mentioned are as follows: path of knowledge (*Jnana marga*), path of devotion (*bhakti marga*), path of action (*karma marga*), and path of psychophysical exercises (*raja marga*). There is no exclusivity of one another in these four paths. The individual people are not exclusively reflective, emotional, active, or experimental, yet their diverse life conditions may lead them along one path or another. Hindus are encouraged to test all four and combine them as they suit their needs (Wilson 2002:116). Hindus believe that with any

path they follow, as long as their motive is genuine, through God's grace, they are assured that they will reach their goal. Parrinder writes, "Go to Him alone for refuge with all Your being, by His grace you'll gain the highest peace and His eternal resting place." This invitation is followed by yet another salvific offer in *Bhagvad-Gita*: "Come to Me alone for refuge, abandoning all things of law, and have no fear, from every ill I shall release you evermore" (1996:118).

It is observed by Wilson (2002:116) that the spiritual personality types and the matching of the four paths through which Hindu believers can hope to reach the goal of their religious aspirations is a significant perception from which Christians and people of other faiths can benefit. Several elements of theologies and practices that have grown within Christianity can be examined in relation to these paths. Roof (1999: 13) states that instead of attempting to deal with people of other faiths on the basis of subcultures, "dogmatists, mainstream believers, born again Christians, metaphysical believers and seekers, and secularists", As far as their Christian practices and attitudes are concerned, it can be recognised that there are several contributing factors that people emphasise for devotional, ethical, philosophical and monastical ways of organising their personal and communal religious lives.

Buddhism as a religion, its principal spiritual leader, *Gautama Siddharta*, preached the principle of the middle way between self- mortification through extreme self-denial on one hand and sensory indulgence on the other. Two sentences from his parting speech are often cited to catch a glimpse of his teaching as Smith (1991: 88) writes, "all compounded things decay. Work out Your own salvation with diligence." Although Buddha never claimed to be a Saviour of his followers, his teaching and his concern in sharing his message has been understood and interpreted to be him functioning as a Saviour by showing his followers the right path. This idea is particularly found in Mahayana Buddhism. Wilson (2002:117) states:

According to Mahayana Buddhism, the enlightened Buddha, instead of being closed up in silence of transcendent wisdom, took compassion on the people and indulged in ministry of communicating the spiritual truth he was able to possess through his enlightenment. His concern was to communicate spiritual cure than indulge in idle speculation.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a number of Christian theologians explored the possible connections between Christianity and Buddhism. The question was posed: Did Jesus and the early theologians know about Buddhist teachings? It is suggested that some did; for instance, they had knowledge of Jesus and Buddha (Borg and Riegert 1997:56) and *Lights of the World: Buddha and Christ* (Smart 1997:102), even though in some of the current publications, there is still debate on this issue. Enomiya-Lassalle (1971: 228) indicates that there are some European authors who are of the view that Christianity influenced the Buddhist version of Amidism, which emerged in Japan. There are similarities between Christian theology and Zen Buddhism, which have been well documented and a number of Christians that have experimented with Buddhism for their own enhancement of faith and dedication. Enomiya-Lassalle (1971: 235) writes, "in mystical experience Zen and Christian Mystics meet." The understanding of Buddhism as world denying, denying the reality of personal selfhood and disproving the idea of eternal life is preserved as opposed to Christian faith.

Christian teaching on Jesus emptying Himself of His privilege is key teaching in the New Testament; when relating this to Buddhist concepts of emptiness and dependent -arising. Keenan (1989:225) proposes the probability of an emerging Mahayana Christology. Keenan (1989:226) further explains this as follows:

In a Mahayana understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, he is empty of any essence that might identify him and serve as definition of his being.... Jesus' being is not to be understood as an objectively real essence set over against the believer (or the historian). Rather, his being is the being of emptiness, the negation of all clinging to selfhood and essence in an awareness of the dependently co-arisen being of life in the world.

This was not only true of Jesus, but also of His disciples. Hinayana Buddhism instructs an individual to work out one's own deliverance; the Mahayana custom has a place for the enlightenment of one's self, which assists a seeker in the process of deliverance. This provides a link with Christianity to Mahayana as well as to people of other faiths that have room for saviours, saints, teachers, and other religious guides for those in the quest of one's deliverance (Wilson 2002:118-119).

The Sikhs (disciples) consider their faith to have emerged because of a revelation which was received by *gurus* starting with Guru Nanak. According to Singh (1992:33), Sikhism was born in India in the setting of Hindu and Islam religions. Guru Nanak, although born a Hindu, by means of the enlightenment he received through revelation, affirmed that God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and gave teaching on a new way through Sikhism. Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam. It was known to have been influenced by the bhakti and Sufi traditions of Northern India. Sikhs believe that God communicates through gurus (teachers), but is beyond human understanding. He unfolds truth to human beings through the perfect guru (teacher): Singh says: "Guru is the ladder, dinghy, and the raft by means of which one reaches God" (1992: 33).

Sikhism acknowledges ten gurus who gave them the true teaching, which is compiled in the sacred book for them known as *Granth Sahib* or *Collection of Sacred Wisdom*. This sacred book of Sikhism is the living Guru for Sikhs, simply because they believe that in it are God's words. The Sikhs believe that mortal people can be redeemed by the Lord's favour. God's favour leads to forgiveness and redemption. Singh (1992: 50-51) affirms this by saying "The seeker must seek God's grace as a beggar yearns for alms." Salvation for Sikhs is the union with God, which is the ultimate goal of a faithful Sikh. Smith (1998: 77) indicates also that, "Apart from God, life has no meaning; it is separation from God that causes human suffering." In Sikhism, there is no teaching about denial of the world. They teach that one has



to earn a decent living, support the family with proper earnings and donate one-tenth of one's income to charity. Among Eastern religions, Sikhism is considered closest to Christianity. This may be because there was an input of Islam and the Bhakti tradition of Hinduism in its formation as a religion. In reaching Sikhs with Gospel, Jesus as a great Teacher or guru could be an important entry point for them.

In his analysis of Confucianism theology, Wilson states that the question that is frequently raised is whether Confucianism is a religion or a system of ethics. Even though Confucius (551 B.C.) lived in a period when dissimilarity between spiritual and material, earthly and heavenly, social and individual was not as sharp as it grew to be in later times. These things coincided with and complemented one another. Though there are strong, ethical rules that are requirements for social living in Confucianism (Wilson 2002:120), its ethical rules are not taken as an end in themselves. The aim of these rules is to facilitate healthy social living among its followers. According to Shih (1981:192), the Chinese religion was moralised by Confucianism.

The ethical norms and rules of Confucianism are linked from its ancestral past to the future generations to come. This gives a sense of continuity for each individual follower. Smith (1991: 186) says that for Confucius, filial piety is of great importance. It is a motivating factor behind the significant socio-religious act of ancestor worship and reverence for elders and seniors. The five constant relationships that establish social life are as follows: those between parent and child, husband and wife, elder sibling and junior sibling, elder friend and junior friend, and ruler and subject (Smith 1998: 175). According to Shih (1981:199-200), the book of rites of Confucianism explains this as follows:

kindness on the part of the Father, and filial duty on that of the Son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of the elders, and deference on that of juniors; with benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister.

The family is treated as a basic unit of society. This is crucial, since the first three relationships evolve within the family circle.

Tao, which means “path” or “way,” and it, cannot be clearly understood by the mind of humanity. Therefore, the inaugural line of Tao Te Ching says, "The Tao that can be told is not eternal Tao" (Mitchell 1991:1). In Tao, there are five individual senses named by Bolt as "the five fingers of the Tao." They are: "The eternal transcendent Tao (mystical); Mother Tao, source of all things (cosmological); the Tao of the great mergence (psychological); the Tao of the ten thousand things (scientific); and the social Tao, the way of humanity (sociological)" (ibid: xvi). This offers perceptions to spiritual realms, correct attitudes about the nature of human psyches, and guidance for interpersonal relationships and social actions.

Tao's central point is living in perfect harmony with the way things are. Taoists believe in mastering nature, not in the sense of having victory over it, but of becoming it. This understated relationship is described in Tao Te Ching as, "Man follows the earth. Earth follows the universe. The universe follows the Tao. The Tao follows only itself." (Mitchell 1991:25)

Christianity as a new faith was presented in its origins with the term a “the Way,” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22). Jesus showed His disciples the way of life. It is this way people must follow in order to be followers of Jesus. Shih says that when the New Testament mentions Christianity as “the Way,” it is a reflection of the people's journey in conjunction with the journey of God with them in the Spirit of Christ.

For Shih (1981: 205), seeing human life as a way is "a precious foundation for a fruitful dialogue between Christianity and Chinese religious traditions, as well as for the possible formation of a theology which, though specifically Chinese, is nevertheless genuinely Christian."

Confucianism and Taoism stress the conversion of the mind and the shaping of external lifestyle, an approach that is not foreign to Christianity. Christianity also places an emphasis on the inner life. However, in these Chinese faiths, what is missing is the element of grace and the importance of the transformation of the soul and Spirit. This calls for a reconsideration of the dichotomy between mind, Spirit, and soul, which is found in Christianity as a faith.

Martinson (1999: 97) perceives that “there is perhaps no cult more widely practised worldwide, excepting much of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim world, than worship of the ancestors. In parts of the Christian and Muslim world, it survives in part as the veneration of saints. But ancestors are not saints; they are ancestors, my own ancestors.” Theological arguments for the assimilation of ancestral worship have been offered in a number of the Southeast Asian Christian communities and in some of the African churches. For instance, Archbishop Buti Tthagale, of Bloemfontein, South Africa, "suggested that a libation of blood which is a ritual of pouring as a symbolic sacrifice honouring the ancestors of black Africans should be incorporated into local Catholic liturgies such as mass" (in Wilson 2002:122). This suggestion was not new, however; it restates the current restlessness in some of the traditional forms of Christian faith.

In light of all of the above, a serious and meaningful engagement with these people of other faiths is in order. Several Christian theologians look at the pursuit that is needed in understanding, enunciating, and sharing God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. (Wilson 2002:123). Christians need to speak about the hope they have in Jesus Christ with gentleness and reverence. This should always be done in the Spirit of God (1 Pet 3:15). Song (1999: 25) states,

What we, Christians and theologians, have often done sometimes knowingly and sometimes scarcely knowing, is to correlate our talk about God for the talk God is supposed to be doing. We speak for God, although it often is doubtful whether God is

willing to identify Himself with what we say in God's behalf. We speak in God's name, not thinking whether we are just using the name of God to give credence to what we are saying.

Therefore, the challenge for the Christian community is to understand how God is working outside their community.

The Roman Catholic Church has expressed a serious concern for the people of other faiths at their Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council Document *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church), affirmed that:

Those who have not yet received the gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place, there is the people to whom the covenants and the promises were given, and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers, this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts he makes nor of the calls He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29). Nevertheless, the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place, among these there are the Moslems who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift, and who as Saviour wills that all men be saved (cf. 1 Tim 2:4) (Vatican II 1964:7-8).

Cobb, Jr. (1982), in his book *Beyond Dialogue*, has suggested that those engaging in reaching out to people of other faiths should move beyond dialogue by integrating the perception of their neighbour's religion to their own, and vice versa, for the sake of a shared examination of respective religions. He stated that there should be a Buddhized Christianity and a Christianized Buddhism for uplifting each other, and argues that:

A Christianity, which has been transformed by the incorporation of the Buddhist insight into the nature of reality, will be a very different Christianity from any we now know. A Buddhism that has incorporated Jesus Christ will be very different Buddhism from any we now know. That will not obliterate the difference between the two traditions, but it will provide a new basis for fresh dialogue and fresh transformation. The lines that now sharply divide us will increasingly blur (Cobb Jr. 1982:142).

It is clear that from Cobb Jr.'s (ibid) perspective that he saw the Mission of Christianity firstly as a Mission of self-transformation from its narrow-minded traditions if at all it has to

be perceived and offered as worldwide faith. In this instance, the emphasis is not as such on individual transformation, but on the transformation of faith traditions as a whole.

Panikkar (1999) suggests that in order to obtain the goal of interreligious dialogue, this dialogue should take place in people's minds and hearts and in the community at large. He further explains that:

When the dialogue catches hold of our entire person and removes our many masks, because something stirs within us, we begin the 'intra-religious dialogue.' ... In this dialogue, we are in search of salvation, and we accept being taught by others, not only by our own clan. We thus transcend the more or less unconscious attitude of private property in the religious realm. Intra-religious dialogue is, of its very nature, an act of assimilation -- which I would call Eucharistic. It tries to assimilate the transcendent into our immanence (ibid: xvi-xvii).

Consequently, it is evident that interfaith encounters are not an optional aspect of the Christian faith, but a significant ingredient for its regeneration.

Pieris suggests a variation on the word "enculturation," which is a gradual acceptance of another's culture, a category that Roman Catholics appear to like better when promoting engagement of Western Christianity with non-Western cultures. Enculturation functions as the principle of culture-religion dichotomy. This dichotomy creates a foundational possibility of the coming together of "the Christian religions minus European culture" with "Asian culture minus non-Christian religion." (1988:52). This is the assumption that Pieris challenges, by arguing that:

...the separation of religion from culture (as in Latin Christianity) and religion from philosophy (as in Hellenic Christianity) makes little sense in the Asian society.... The culture and religion are overlapping facets of one indivisible soteriology, which is at once a view of life and a path of deliverance; it is both a philosophy that is basically a religious vision, and a religion that is a philosophy of life (ibid).

For this reason, Pieris asks religious people to realise that what is needed is not just "enculturation" but "enreligionisation" of the church (ibid). In other words, what is imperatively needed in this era is a sincere interaction with the prevalent religions of people in order to engage in a complete way with the life of people of other faiths.

In further consideration of how Christian theologies have attempted to view and understand people of other faiths, it is explicit that there are few of the major ways of the thinking of some of the theologians. These ways are often categorised into three levels: exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist. However, as Ida Glaser (2005:25) puts it, not all Christians fit precisely into any of these classifications, and even though they deem it fit, they perhaps clarify their beliefs in various ways.

Exclusivists' theologians are certain that salvation is only made available through having faith in Christ Jesus. They imply that all people can come to the knowledge of something about God by general revelation, that is, through looking at God's creation and at themselves. The reason is that the creation reveals something about the Creator God, and that they themselves are made in His image. Nevertheless, God chose to reveal Himself particularly through Israel and supremely in Christ and this can only be learned about dependably through the Word of God, the Bible. Further, exclusivists believe that the Holy Spirit can labour in anybody anywhere, and leads to Jesus. Therefore, what is needed is for God's chosen people to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples (Glaser, 2005:28).

The exclusivist theologians agree that salvation is through Jesus Christ, however, they inquire whether possibly people who belong to other faiths might still be saved through him. They argue that probably there are some people who are like the sheep mentioned in Matthew 25:37, who do not realise that they are serving Jesus Christ. Maybe there are other people who like the tax collector of Luke 18:13, who recognise their sin and call to God for mercy. It is evident that the Jesus could save them since His Mission is in the business of saving the lost that comes into repentance of sin. Glaser goes on to indicate that, some inclusivists have gone ahead to suggest that there might be special revelation outside that recorded in the Bible. Possibly, there are histories of other peoples, or their holy books, that can function for them like the history of Israel and the Old Testament do for Christians, pointing them towards

Christ. Some would say that theology should be 'theocentric' rather than 'Christocentric'; that is we need to think more about God, the Father of all peoples, than about Jesus Christ who came to a particular people at a particular time. Although Christ came in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, he can be seen at work in many times. The Holy Spirit cannot be limited to his link with Jesus (Glaser 2005: 29).

Pluralist theologians, say that Christ is not the only way to salvation. They indicate that salvation is available through all faiths. Some even believe that all people will be saved, whether they follow a faith or not. According to the Christian faith, this is a very dangerous belief. They usually believe that God can be seen in his creation, but tend to think of the different faiths as different human responses to what different people see of him rather than results of any special revelation. Some of these pluralists would go on to say that, people should not speak of God but of 'transcendent' or 'reality', since not all faiths have a place for God but all have a sense of something absolute. 'Christ' is then a universal being called 'the cosmic Christ', and the Holy Spirit is better understood as a universal Spirit affecting all people (Glaser 2005: 29).

In summary, the exclusivism is a way of describing some of the traditional Christian thinking that focuses on Jesus as the revelation of God, the cross as the way of salvation, and biblical condemnation of worship of anything other than God. The Inclusivism keeps much more of traditional understanding, but as well asks whether Christians can have more positive views of people of other faiths. It reacts against colonial attitudes and fears that exclusivist ideas make Christians superior to other people. Surely God will not judge people simply because they have not heard the gospel? say inclusivists. Surely, we have no right to say that all those millions of people of different faiths are lost? Yes, we want to be faithful to Christ, but how can we love our neighbour if we think they are damned?' (Glaser, 2005: 30).

However, if the gospel is preached to the people and they themselves reject it, it is imperative

that they cannot escape judgement of their rejection, there must be a response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and there must be repentance.

Moreover, both exclusivist and inclusivist thinkers see Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of God. Both go to the Bible with their questions although they may read it differently. Pluralists no longer accept Christ or the Bible as higher than other religious authorities and this leads them to the ideas about God that sometimes seem no longer Christian. How, we wonder, can people who still call themselves 'Christians' think like this? (Glaser 2005: 30). It is evidently strange; how people who are called theologians can think so differently about God and then aim at doing Mission to the people of other faiths. This is something that needs be prayed about and dealt with as God's true children endeavour to work hard in sharing their faith among the Muslim people.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSION AMONG THE DIGO TRIBE**

This chapter concisely appraises the history of Christianity's efforts at evangelising Muslims and investigates some of the significant concepts of evangelism that underlie the present attempts to witness to them. It then narrows down to the specific history of Christian Mission to the Digo people of Kenya, Africa. It historically examines people like the Augustinian Friars, who when accompanying Portuguese travellers between 1498 and 1700, first attempted to bring Christianity to the coast of Kenya. Hildebrandt (1981:65) documents that the Augustinians built a monastery in 1567 and a church in 1598 in Mombasa. Though the Augustinians' major interest was to give spiritual service to the traders from Portugal, they were also able to receive some response from the slaves and some of the key leaders in Mombasa. The church also operated a branch of the Misericordia, an organisation that was to look after needy people, particularly orphans, with assistance from the government (King 1971:32).

Subsequently, the departure of the Portuguese missionaries in 1698 and the arrival of the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries in 1848 led to the establishment of the missionary movement that has dominated Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa to this day. During this period of 150 years, the Digo and the Segeju were being converted to Islam, creating the biggest challenge for Christian missionaries in spreading Christianity along the coast of East Africa. In other words, this chapter investigates the historical methods of evangelising Muslims. This includes the period of Portuguese Dominican missionaries (1498-1700), Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann (1844-1875), the Church Missionary Society (1875-1914), the period of the late Ottoman Empire from 1800 to 1918, the period of colonialism and nationalism which ran from 1919 to 1946 (Pikkert 2008:80-81), the period of

the rise of the Arab world from the 1947 to 1978, and the period of Islamic fundamentalism from 1979 to the present time.

### **3.1 HISTORICAL METHODS OF EVANGELISING MUSLIMS**

There are many different approaches that exist for doing Gospel outreach to Muslims, as has already been discussed. According to Pikkert (2008:23), there are four historical periods of Protestant missionary interaction with Muslims, which are discussed below.

#### **3.1.1 The period of Portuguese Dominican missionaries (1498-1700)**

Hastings (1994:122) indicates that the work of the Dominicans in the mid-seventeenth century southeast of Zimbabwe, Africa, in Sena, Sofala, and Mombasa was evidently an extension of colonial powers. Nevertheless, their work led to the conversion of King Nzinga Nkuvu and one of his chiefs, Mani Soyo, in an encounter with Portuguese traders and priests in the kingdom of Kongo in 1491, in the establishment of Christianity for the first time in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hastings, 1994:73). However, the Christian Dominicans were mostly serving a group of expatriates who were involved in slave trade and, as such; they were not working to find a genuine African Church. In other words, their main concern was not to teach the native Africans the Christian faith, even though there were circumstances where Africans became Christians; rather, their main interest was to offer spiritual service to their expatriate monarchs. Hastings (1994:122) wrote:

The Dominican Joao dos Santos in his detailed, highly reliable account of East Africa in the 1590s, *Ethiopian oriental*, gives one a very clear impression of such Christian Communities, a core of Portuguese, a larger number of *misticos* and Africans, a few hundred in all, ignorant and isolated, huddled around a Portuguese fort. That was a little before the Dominicans advanced into Mutapa, but they did so as chaplains to Portuguese traders and soldiers, not as missionaries to African society. Not a single missionary, declared Antonio da Conceicao angrily in 1696, had ever worked among the Africans or taught them Christianity. Of all these tiny communities, essentially Portuguese, wherever in Africa they were to be found, it is that of Mombasa we know far the best because of the massacre of the Christians there in 1631 by the King of Mombasa and the evidence collected to assist their possible canonisation for

martyrdom. It included a number of Africans, some of whom were not slaves, but it remained predominantly a group of expatriates.

The local Digo people were not able to see a difference between Islam and Christianity, partly because of the violence associated with “Fort Jesus” in Mombasa, and partly because both the Muslims and Christians were trying to control the Digo for the purposes of trading. Regarding the Portuguese, Hastings says “trade required the establishment of forts but it was also seen as a religious, and even a missionary, activity. It was part of an anti-Islamic Crusade,”. It also required papal approval and ecclesiastical authorisation (Hastings 1994:71). Historically, Crusades were known to be any of the military expeditions undertaken by Christian powers in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries to win the Holy Land from the Muslims. Hillenbrand (2007) says that the Crusades from the Western viewpoint were seen as a series of campaigns motivated by the desire on the part of Western European Christians to bring the holy places of Christendom and, above all, Jerusalem, under their protection.

The spread of Islam originally took place quickly due to its militaristic nature. Lapidus (1988:244-245) states that Muslim conquerors ordinarily desired to dominate rather than convert. “They did not require conversion, but rather subordination of non-Muslim peoples.” The armies of Islam swept diagonally across the Middle East and North Africa with great effectiveness and accomplishment. Most of the key centres of Christian learning and civilisation disappeared predictably as the then known Christian world was overwhelmed by the attacking Muslims. It was recorded that in just a few decades, Islam ruled from India to Morocco. A century later, Muslims held territory as well in the Far East and in Europe, after Indonesia, Malaysia, Sicily, and Spain came under Islamic control (ibid:245).

During this period, Christian rulers responded by fighting back, although North Africa would never be reclaimed. Spain as a country would not be completely recaptured and came under the governance of Christian rulers until 1492, the year Christopher Columbus sailed to

America. In the Middle East, the political and religious leaders of the Roman Empire based in Constantinople, requested military help from the political and religious leaders of the newly incipient European nation-states in the former Western Roman Empire. The Christian leaders of developing Europe overwhelmingly responded to this call to repel Islamic attack and recapture lost Christian territory. Their comeback led to a number of waves of military subjugation in the Middle East. These responsive events were known as the Crusades. Mohammed (1999:35) says that perhaps there was no other historical event that had fostered Muslim-Christian enmity as harshly as the Crusades. "The Crusades left a trail of bitterness between Western Christians and Muslims which remains a living factor in the world situation to the present day."

In reality though, before the eruption of the Crusades, Christianity and Islam were in conflict, as can be seen in 1095 in Spain, Sicily and the Byzantine East. The relationship of the two faiths had already started to deteriorate long before the Crusades came about (Cowdrey 2002:204-205). Nevertheless, it is also clear that there were isolated examples of an optimistic approach, such as the one seen in Pope Gregory VII's exceptionally approachable attitude in his letter to an-Nasir, the Muslim emir of Mauretania, in 1076, which provides proof that things could have gone in a different way. Subsequently, Gregory Himself tried to initiate a holy war against the Turks in 1074 (Prawer, Kedar, Mayer & Smail 1982:27-40). However, it is hard to overstate the influence of the first Crusade in terms of its destructive effect. Actually, it not only totally traumatised the Muslim people of Syria and Palestine, but it resulted in the need to protect the lands invaded by the first Crusaders who had planned the outcome of cutting off other Christian methods from Islam as well.

The leaders of the states that developed in the Levant were unsuccessful in their attempts to induce their European co-religionists to cross the sea in big numbers to settle and to develop affirmative affiliation with Byzantium. That would have developed a unified

Christian facade against the Muslims. In the resultant Islamic retaliation that gradually grew over the course of the twelfth century, these leaders resurfaced with a stream of pleas to the West and above all to the papal courts of justice. The Popes aggressively responded and the Church's relationship with the Islamic experts of the whole Middle East, from Anatolia to the Nile delta, was one of normative enmity (Prawer, Kedar, Mayer & Smail, 1982: 40).

The protracted talks between Richard I and Saladin in 1191 show that no compromise was conceivable concerning the keeping of the holy places. This is clear as Ibn Shaddad Saladin hopelessly comments to the King of England that, "Jerusalem is to us as it is to you. It is even more important for us, since it is the site of our Prophet's nocturnal journey and the place where the people will assemble on the Day of Judgement." (Hillenbrand, 1999: 257-327). Any friendliness between the two religions, such as that evidenced in Pope Gregory VII's 1076 letter, failed to reappear. Norman Daniel indicates this: "Once the Muslims were denominated as the enemies of God, further seeking for common ground was useless" (Daniel 1979:255). O'Callaghan (2003: 55) points out that the Politics of Emperor Frederick II in 1229 did not mask the previously mentioned fact. Furthermore, the 'success' of the Crusades in the Western Mediterranean area had destructive effects on the Christian relationship with Islam in all these areas, above all in Iberia, and the members of the two faiths became more antagonistic to each other than they had been before.

Many argued that crusading was a 'Battle', and that the Crusaders were defending the Holy Land on two grounds. The first was religious, which was due to The Land's sanctification by Jesus' blood, which established the nation of Palestine as the common inheritance of all believers of Christianity and made it exclusively unsuitable, that Islam be practised in that place. The second was legal and argued for continuity between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church. According to the researcher, the image of Islam appeared to Christians as that of the attacker, the unjust inhabitant of lands, which indisputably

belonged to the Christians. However, 13<sup>th</sup> Century observers considered this situation to be outside the Holy Land, hence were divided in their views. Housley writes that the hard-liners, led by Hostiensis, argued that the Pope used universal imperium because of his role as Christ's vicar and could therefore direct Crusaders to attack any infidels. This included Muslims; while moderates, led by Pope Innocent IV, repudiated this, declaring that infidels had the natural right to own land and could be legitimately attacked only under specific circumstances. Such circumstances included denying missionary preaching; hence this was far from being a "soft" or friendly approach. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that canon lawyers and theologians as a group never acknowledged the idea that Crusaders had *carte blanche* to attack and occupy Muslim lands. This even applied to Aquinas, who was contemptuous of Islam but shadowed the line of the moderates on the issue of war against infidels (Housley 2007:199-200).

Housley (2007:200) argues that after the first Crusade, the conditions in which the Popes turned their attention to the Holy Land was one of continual crisis. The response in the crusading would have been necessary when responding either to a calamity or to an Islamic military accumulation. Some church leaders like The Popes were known to be well aware that their papal bulls would form the groundwork for the preaching of the Cross; for instance, Innocent III and others were themselves famous for their ability as missionaries.

Moore (1987:94) argues that between the millennium and the mid-thirteenth century, the social hierarchy of Catholic Europe, led by its priestly elite, devised a set of ideas, images, and oppressive techniques that singled out and persecuted certain "out-groups" such as heretics, Jews, and lepers. In this case, the Muslims did not form one of the groups that Moore nominated for his analysis because they were an "external" rather than "internal" threat. Comparably though, the same treatment was handed down to Jews and Muslims with both subject to Christian regulation in the legislation conceded at the Fourth Lateran Council

in 1215 (Tolan, 2002:195-198). In the context of crusading specifically, recent research has indicated that prominent churchmen in both the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries viewed Jews, heretics, and Muslims in the same light; as a consequence, the analogies between Moore's study and the images that have been examined are both effective and several (Tolan, 2002:135-169).

Chevedden points out that Crusading was considered as part of God's plan for salvation history as Pope Urban<sup>14</sup> divided this plan of Christian history into four major eras: (1) the era of Christian antiquity; (2) the era of Islamic dominance; (3) the era of Christian reconquest; and (4) the era of Christian restoration. The first era countersigned the development and growth of early Christianity as it grew from a small and dark sect to become the universal religion of a world empire and truly a world religion. The second era saw the exultant expansion of the authority of Islam and the conquest of more than half of Christendom. Christians were predestined to suffer defeat and catastrophe and this was not because God was praiseworthy of blame as per se, but because God had seen fit to punish the sins of His people (2011:273). The power of Islam was the tool of God's anger. In the Psalms, the Psalmist says, "He punished their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges" (88:33-43). The victory of Islam, nevertheless, ultimately brought its own demise as Daniel writes: "God, the ruler of all things, who by His wisdom and fortitude, transfers rule when He wishes and changes the times" (Dan. 2:21). God in a translation reign, a change from Islamic to Christian rule, had freed His people from "the servitude of the pagans," in this instance, from the Muslims by the victorious power of Christian princes, thus inducting the third and fourth eras of Christian history (Cowdrey 1998:436-437). The last two eras covered the time of the Crusades in which reconquest and restorations were the central

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099) is chosen here since he was the so called founding father of crusading, to present a view of the Crusades from within, and Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (1039-1107), a Muslim jurist from Damascus, to offer a view of the Crusades from without.

themes (Chevedden 2011:273). Pope Urban believed that in his time, God had eased the anguish of the Christian people and had condescended to exalt their faith. It is recorded when Urban was telling Bishop Peter of Huesca in their day that

He has conquered (debellauit) the Turks in Asia and the Moors in Europe with Christian forces, and He has restored (restituit) once famous cities to the practice of His religion by an even more immanent divine grace. Among these, He has released (liberatam) the cathedral city of Huesca from the tyranny of the Saracens by the vigorous effort of our beloved Son, King Peter of Aragon, and has reestablished (reformauit) His Catholic Church (Becker 1988:348-439).

In history, this Pope saw the expression of the divine purpose, for his own not only time and age, but as well as for all the ages of Christian history. The Pope considered this time as one in which God wanted the cooperation of Christian warriors, such as Peter I of Aragon and Navarre (1094-1104), to carry out His plan of Christian reconquest and restoration throughout the Mediterranean. Urban (in Becker 1988:339-358) realised that he had also a part to play in God's plan, and said, "Therefore, we, with the help of God, wish to be fellow-labourers in this restoration". In this restoration effort, the Pope was able to advance His Mission in the central, Western, and eastern Mediterranean through campaigns which brought about the promise of restoration and the return of the "Holy Church" to "the former position" that was theirs before the coming of Islam. This was in accordance with God's will and gracious resolution." The Pope looked at this as the reinstallation of the previous position of the Church. This did not appear to have been an end in itself, but rather, as a means to a greater and more important objective of the continuation of the Mission of the Church. The purpose was to "make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" as outlined in Matthew 28:19. (Chevedden 2011:274).

In Urban's mind there coexisted the objectives of reestablishing the church into its former position and resumption of the church's Mission; however, he recognised that these objectives were only to be obtained in series thus attaining the first objective was a condition for attaining the second objective. The two objectives were predicated on the success of the



enormous task of reconquering the lost lands of Christendom from the authority of Islam. The Crusade of reaccessions was to lead to the Crusade of the redevelopment of the church. The Crusade of rebuilding the church was to lead to the Crusade of missionary evangelisation. If Pope Urban did not give his full attention to the apostolic mission of the church, it was not because he considered it unimportant, but rather because the tasks of reaccession and restoration engrossed all his energies. In other words, the sequence was first the reaccession, then restoration, then evangelisation (Chevedden, 2011:276).

Additionally, when mentioning Crusade and Mission, Pope Urban was deeply aware of the universal Mission of the Church, which was to proclaim and to spread the Kingdom of God, and therefore, the function of the Crusades was to effect this course. The crusading movement would provide an unprecedented opportunity for the Church to realise its established objective of “preaching the gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15). Although the Islamic overthrown movements of the seventh and eighth centuries had erected a barrier against the spread of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean, this barrier was destroyed by the reconquest of ancient ecclesiastical provinces, hence the Church was able to resume its world Mission. This was an opportunity Pope Urban did not want to miss and indeed, did not miss, for he was able to initiate the Crusades in his time (Van Engen 2008:625-643).

Urban, during his first year as pontificate in 1088, took action in restoring both the Church to its previous position and in fulfilling the world Mission of spreading the Kingdom of God. He restored the then newly reconquered Toledo to ecclesiastical primacy within Spain and directed its incumbent Archbishop Bernard de Sauvetot to assume a programme of transformation. He told him, “with warm affection we exhort you, reverend brother, that you live worthy of so high and honoured a pontificate, taking care always not to give offence to Christians or to Muslims; strive by word and example, God helping, to convert the infidels

[i.e., the Muslims] to the faith.”<sup>15</sup> Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) who in 1074 placed evangelisation among its undertakings and endeavoured to convert the ruler of Zaragoza Aḥmad I al-Muqtadir (441-475/1049-1082) to Christianity (Cutler 1968:57-71) preceded this transformation programme.

In the Mediterranean, Benjamin Kedar (1988:49-57) saw conversionary effort as a counterpart on what he termed as the intellectual plane of the Latin military counteroffensive against Islam. He found the evidence of the new missionary approach of the Church to Islam in the preaching of Christ Jesus in Syria by Richard, the abbot of St. Vanne, in 1026-1027, and in the evangelisation efforts of Gregory VII in Sicily and North Africa. In this evidence, they added in the prescription of ecclesiastical power of the propagation of the faith as a requirement for acquiring a Crusade indulgence. In 1076, when Pope Gregory approved a Crusade indulgence to Count Roger d’Hauteville (1031-1101) and to his cavaliers, who were about to fight with him against the Muslims in Sicily, he wanted Roger and his cavaliers to receive the Sacrament of Penance. He requested that Roger especially keep Himself from capital offences and pursue to spread the worship of Christianity among the Muslims (Cowdrey, 2002:193-194). This situation required Roger to spread the Christian faith among the Muslims through the links of the crusading enterprise, which was the Mission of the Church. However, Kedar strongly rejected that Christian missionising among the Muslims originated from the crusading enterprise. Rather, it ascended from the increasing emphasis within the Latin West on proselytisation to fellow Christians, which ultimately found an

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<sup>15</sup> Urban II wrote to Bernard de Sauvetot, archbishop of Toledo, Anagni, 15 October 1088; *Documentacion pontificia*, ed. Mansilla, 44, no. 27: “Te, reverentissime frater, affectione intima exortamus, quatenus dignum te tanti honore pontificii semper exhibeas christianis ac sarracenis sine offensione semper esse procurans et ad fidem infideles convertere, Deo largiente, verbis studeas et exemplis”; trans. Robert I. Burns, “Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion,” *American Historical Review* 76, no. 5 (December 1971): 1386-1434, at 1389.

external outlet in the mid-twelfth century in the form of preaching to the Muslims (1988:67, 133-134).

Kedar (1988:134) drew a distinction between Crusade and Mission, whereby he introduced an external social situation of preaching to the Christians, which is made to account for a relationship between Crusade and Mission. He further suggested an extended time lapse between the onset of crusading events and the evolution of Saracen conversion into a crusading objective, (ibid) so that the known founding Father of the Crusade movement, Pope Urban II, could not get credit for associating Muslim conversion with the Crusades.

The option that Urban did not link the Crusade and Mission is supported in Kedar's mind by the fact that not one of the current reports of Urban's Clermont address of 1095 indicates Saracen conversion as an express goal. It is clear that Saracen conversion was neither stated nor alluded to in Urban's extant letters from the years 1095 to 1099 in which he mentions the Crusade. Moreover, none of the existing papal summons to later crusading expeditions, which call for the protection or recovery of Jerusalem and the crusading Kingdom, portrays Saracen conversion as an objective of the Crusade (Whalen 2009:57-58). The query that Kedar asks is not whether Urban regarded the Crusade of reconquest, the Crusade of reconstruction of the Church and the Crusade of evangelisation to be indissolubly connected and jointly related. However, the question was to what extent was Muslim conversion advanced in the easternmost point of the Catholic European counterattack, the Crusade (1988:50). He associated the beginning of conversion as a crusading objective with the real development of Muslim conversion in the East.

In this undertaking, Kedar turned away from his inquiry when Muslim conversion first manifested itself as a crusading goal and concentrated on the extent to which missionary hard work targeted Muslims and essentially attained victory. The vital condition for the

beginning of conversion as a crusading objective was some kind of communication or connection between Crusade and Mission, the reason being, if Crusade and Mission were fully separate from one another, they would not be able to relate or correspond with one another. Kedar (1988:55) advances such a sharp separation between Crusade and Mission that any correspondence between the two can only come about by the interference of external developments of crusading. A grievous issue with Kedar's Crusade and Mission dualism is that it disregards the fundamental reason behind Urban's vision of restoring the Church in the first place, hence the realisation of the Mission of the Church. The restoration of the Church was not pursued for its own sake, but for the ultimate service at its end.

Conversely, Christians should be aware that not everyone during the Middle Ages supported or were for the Crusades. There were some prominent Christian leaders in the Middle Ages who opposed the militaristic method of the Crusaders. Three outstanding individuals who serve as examples are Peter the Venerable, Francis of Assisi, and Raymond Lull.

Peter the Venerable (1092 to 1156) was the head of the monastery and influential at Cluny from 1122 to 1156. Apart from his authority and functioning under the authoritarian regulations of Cluniac monastic rule were six hundred other monasteries throughout Western Europe, with a total of over ten thousand monks and nuns. It was through Peter's aid that the first translation of the Qur'an into Latin was made. Peter vehemently opposed the Christian militaristic nature of the Crusades and he sought to reach Muslims with the gospel through peaceful missionary attempts. He totally disapproved of the Crusades and viewed the Crusaders' objective of military and political governance over the Muslims as being out of order. Peter wrote unambiguously to those who were under his monastic authority that "the avowed purposes and goals of the Crusade had omitted entirely what should have been the most central Christian concern, namely the conversion of the Moslems" (in Braswell,

1996:258-259). He also wrote to the Muslims of Spain whom he endeavoured to reach with the Gospel on a number of occasions that “I attack you not as some do, by arms, but by words; not with force, but with reason; not with hatred, but by love. Loving, I write you, writing, I invite you to salvation” (Braswell, 1996:259).

In 1182 to 1226, Francis of Assisi was well known for his commitment to devotion and strictness. However, not so well known, it would seem, was St. Francis’ concern for outreach to Muslims with the gospel in the centre of the Crusades. He as well opposed the militaristic nature of the Crusades, and held that the central message of Christianity was that of the love of God. St. Francis’ emphasis of the gospel message of God’s love through Christ stood in direct contradiction to the actions of the Crusaders, who continually committed awful atrocities in the name of Christ and Christendom. Mohammed wrote regarding St. Francis that, “He was convinced that if Muslims were not converted, it was because the gospel had not been presented to them in its simplicity and beauty.” St. Francis in response to this outcome and in contrast to the Crusaders, made a missionary journey to Egypt in 1219 in order to preach the love of God to Muslims. This happened as a result of getting an audience with the Sultan of Egypt, to whom he presented the gospel as well.

In most places where they traded in Africa, the Portuguese kept an eye open for an opportunity of establishing Christian Mission. For instance, King (1971:31) points out that in Ghana, Benin, and the Congo Kingdom, the Portuguese sent missionaries along with traders and baptised many people, including members of the royal families. The Portuguese found it difficult to make any permanent Christian impact within the coast due to strong hostility from the Muslims in Mombasa. As the Portuguese’s influence weakened, the Christian converts reverted to Islam, and those who attempted to resist were murdered (Groves, 1948:138). The Digo people were as a result left without any feasible gospel witness up to the year 1700. In

addition, the Muslims were once more left in control of the coast and wiped out any possibility of Christian witness during the eighteenth century.

### **3.1.2 The period of Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann (1844-1875)**

Groves (1954:98) records that on May 5, 1844, a German missionary, J. Ludwig Krapf, who was born in 1810 near Tübingen in Württemberg, arrived in Mombasa to start a Mission under the CMS. After Krapf learned the Swahili language, he translated the whole New Testament into Swahili by 1846, and compiled a dictionary of about 4000 words. This was the first time that missionaries attempted to contextualise the gospel to the Swahili people of East Africa. Krapf and his teammate, Johannes Rebmann, made many journeys inland from Mombasa and founded the first Mission station among the Mijikenda in Rabai *Mpya* (New Rabai) in 1846, about 15 miles north of Mombasa. Later on, four Methodist missionaries who were brought to Mombasa by Krapf in 1862 founded the first Methodist Mission station in Ribe.

When Krapf (1968:268) visited *Udighoni* in 1848, he found the Digo people had deserted their homesteads and moved to their farms. Further in his account, he indicates that when his company came to the jungle in which the Kwale village was located, he counted about seventy huts, of which very few were occupied since most of the people were living on their plantations. Kraft noted that the Digo people were using pipes for smoking tobacco like Europeans. He also noticed that they made their own utensils; using well designed bowls which were constructed from clay (Spear 2000:265-271).

The religious behaviour of the Digo people appeared strange to Kraft. He noted that “as regards to religion the Digo appeared to be as indifferent and dull as the Walupangu, their intercourse with the deceptive Mohammedans has much contributed” (Kraft 1968:268).

Krapf and his caravan, on July 22, 1848, had reached Kaya Gonja, a Wadigo village near the river Umba. When they arrived at the Wadigo village of Kusi, Chief Muhensano received

him in a friendly manner; thus, Krapf was given a chance to preach the Gospel to the Digo villagers. However, the Muslims challenged him on the subject of dietary laws, which caused him to speak bravely against Muhammad. In Krapf's (1968:273-274) account, he stated:

I seated myself under a tree, when a crowd of old and young Wadigo assembled round me, who behaved themselves very decorously and respectfully . . . I narrated to them the fall of Adam, and spoke of the atonement through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When they asked me whether we ate pork and the flesh of beasts slaughtered by the Wanika I was obliged to answer in the affirmative; upon which Bana Kheri [a Muslim] was so provoked that he called me a Mkafiri, unbeliever, like the Wanika, so by way of reproof of this and his attempts to ride rough-shod over my Wanika, I told him that in many respects the Suahili were worse than the heathen. I then showed him that Mohammed was an impostor, who had stolen from the Bible of the Christians everything good taught in the Koran, and who had spread his religion by the sword. The Wanika, who listened attentively, were delighted that I had thus driven the proud Mohammedan into a corner.

This type of religious encounter of the old polemic school is illustrative of the early encounters between Digo Muslims and Christian missionaries. In 1875, when Krapf and Rebmann left East Africa, they had not converted a single person to Christianity even though the Mission among the Nyika had been established (Hildebrandt 1981:126). However, Wright (1917:148); as restated in Lundebj (1993:21) indicates that the Rabai Mission made some converts among the Digo people. "One of them, Samuel Isenberg, was martyred as he tried to reach his own people from Rabai in 1878. After completing a certain tribal ceremony, some young Digo warriors struck him down." (ibid).

### **3.1.3 The period of the church missionary society (1875-1914)**

According to Strayer (1978:31), between 1875 and 1914, the Mission operations of the CMS from the Mombasa Diocese were focused on the three Mijikenda tribes who dwelt throughout the city: The Rabai, Giriama, and Digo. At that time, the CMS increased its number of stations from two in Rabai and Freetown to 16 distributed throughout eastern and central Kenya. In addition, the CMS founded Mission stations among the Kamba, Kikuyu and the Taita. In its attempt to expand, the CMS took into consideration three important factors

as noted by Strayer (1978:31), “the nature of Mission initiatives and policies, the presence of European economic and political interests, and the attempts of African societies and their leaders to turn the coming of these various Europeans to their own advantage.”

Whereas the CMS fought against the concept of utilising colonial authority to enrich their Mission expansion, most European settlers did not approve of such cooperation. The view of some settlers was that the natives were to be civilised in order to work for them first, before they were Christianized. “Civilise the native first by the Gospel of Work, and the Gospel of Christ will follow” (Strayer 1978:104). However, other settlers and the CMS missionaries believed that there should be no cooperation of this kind, for it would commingle the interest of the missionary with that of the colonial masters. However, those that were seen to be working as peacemakers between the tribal chiefs were the CMS missionaries, which gave them the reputation of being extremely powerful in political issues (Strayer, 1978:35).

In 1882 a Mission station was founded near the Digo village by the CMS after securing cooperation with the Digo elders in Shamba Hills. What the Digo needed at that particular time was “protection from the ravages of Mbaruk, a Mazrui rebel against the authority of the Sultan of Zanzibar.” (Strayer 1978:35) The Mission station had a good reputation through its work with the Mombasa and Zanzibar authorities (Strayer 1978:35). Nevertheless, the Mission station at Shimba Hills did not witness any of the Digo living in the area during that period. Lundebj (1993:22) points out that by 1904 this Mission station was deserted, and the Mission work was then supervised from Mombasa. This brought about a shift, which led the Shimba Hills CMS station to start serving people in other areas, particularly the Taita who migrated into the Shimba Hills Settlement Scheme from the 1950s. Regarding any Digo converts through the Shimba Hill station, there is no evidence recorded.



### **3.1.4 The period of the late Ottoman Empire (1800-1918)**

This period, the Age of Reason, also known to Protestants as the Age of Enlightenment, started in the seventeenth century and extended through the nineteenth century. This was a period of Mission endeavour in Muslim majority countries, and it was often accompanied by occupying colonial European powers. Christians who were doing Mission work during this time failed to appreciate the Muslim religion (Pikkert, 2008:70). Pikkert states, “even if the people were divided into different sects, they were counted as one race, Arabs with a common language, common customs and social conditions.” (2008:24). Bosch mentions that enlightenment Christianity was tolerant, though only to tolerant religions (1991:272).

Craig and Pikkert (2008) indicate that the “free thought” individualistic approach of the Age of Enlightenment clashed with the dogmatism and group solidarity of Islam. In understanding this Age of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant’s article written in 1784, argues “Enlightenment is a man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity” and “immaturity is the inability to use one’s understanding without guidance from another.” In other words, for Kant, enlightenment was “the courage to think for oneself” (Kant and Ferrer 2009:55). According to Popper (2012:5), enlightenment is “the effort of men to free themselves, to break out of the cage of the closed society and to form an open society.” Yavuz (2013:5-8), explains that enlightenment does not mean the refusal of religion or the disappointment of the world, but rather a fresh way of comprehending the interactions between self and society, society and politics, and science and society. The enlightenment project, since its inception, has had a major influence on religious debates and formed a new way of thinking about religious tradition in light of the notions of reason, progress, science, and public deliberation.

Gülen says that the enlightenment person is someone who is armed with secular and religious ideas and is able to synchronise them in the public debate in order to advance the

shared good. It is also someone who is always polite in public and private daily life. He adds that there is no enlightenment without God (Gülen and Unal 2007:22). In the late Ottoman Empire, some of the important ideas of the enlightenment were put into practice in order to stop the decline of the Ottoman state (Yavuz, 2013: 8). It is interesting that some religions adopted the ideas and practices of the enlightenment, while others completely rejected them. Muslims actually used reason to support their faith regardless of secularists, hence causing more conflicts between Christianity and Islam through a polemic kind of approach.

Guralnik (1970:1102) says that the polemic method, which comprises “argumentation, disputation, and controversial discussion,” dominated Christian interaction with Muslims throughout this period. For instance, in its Scripture and traditions, Muslims are usually polemical of Christianity. Azumbah (2010:88) indicates that anti-Christian polemic is intensely rooted in Islamic source books, and individual Muslims and groups have taken it up as their vocation. Various prominent Muslim scholars, activists and preachers have engaged in anti-Christian polemic in their Mission down the centuries (Ridgeon, 2001:99). On the other hand, in past and modern times, Christians have sought to respond in a similar way to Muslim polemics. Christian anti-Muslim polemics, however, reached its highest point in the nineteenth century in India when Christian missionaries started to get involved with Muslim and Hindu preachers in open debates. The debates created some of the most outstanding literature in the field of polemics, with Gottlieb Pfander’s *Mizan ul-Haqq* most well known among the lot (in Azumbah, 2010:89). The problem with the polemical approach, as Trimingham puts it, was that the

missionaries gave a dogmatic presentation of Christianity. They thought that it was their work to attack and break down the Islamic religious system, and their method was developed accordingly ... They sought to prove to the Muslim by argument and controversy that Christianity was better, and to force an intellectual assent. They failed, for they were fighting on the Muslim’s own ground (Trimingham 1948:45-46).

Christian missionaries might have believed that they won many of the debates; nevertheless, what was obvious was that they made few converts. On the contrary, the arguments stimulated hostile anti-Christian attitudes and definitely contributed to the birth of the most active anti-Christian Islamic movement, the Ahmadiyya Movement, which has specialised and championed anti-Christian polemics in the last century. Ahmed Deedat (2001) was set on his path of anti-Christian polemics by constant attacks which were mounted by a Christian missionary in South Africa. Together, the Ahmadiyya and Ahmed Deedat (2010:89) challenged the root of the gospel among Muslims and converted more Christians in Africa to Islam than anybody might ever have imagined.

Moucarry (2010:91) is correct in saying that polemics “is counter-productive as it usually inspires Muslims to become more radical in their beliefs and it often provokes an offensive reaction too, leading to Muslims attacking Christianity even more vehemently.” Many times, as the researcher ministered and coordinated the Mission work in Digo land, he heard some Christian ministers say that the best form of defence to give to Muslims is to attack them. The words “defence” and “attack” sound offensive and are totally unbiblical (Rom 12:19).

The biggest reservation about polemics from the African perspective has to do with the dogmatic presentation of Christianity for the purpose of scholarly assent. For many centuries, Western Christians either ignored or confronted the Muslim world. Some Christians attempted to reach out to Muslims in a confrontational manner, attacking Muslims and their religion of Islam in a war of words. This approach is found to be counter-productive as it usually inspires Muslims to become more radical in their beliefs and often provokes an offensive reaction as well, with Muslims attacking Christianity even more violently (Azumbah, 2010:89-90). A polemical approach in evangelism with Islam is as well irreconcilable with “the gospel of peace” found in Ephesians 6:15, which is all about love,

reconciliation and pardon. Even though some Christians who were doing Mission work at this time possessed great knowledge of Islam, many of them identified Muhammad as the Antichrist of the Bible (1 John 2:18, 22) and called the Qur'an a false book supporting all manner of fleshly passion (Pikkert 2008: 30). Pikkert further says:

The missionary community, by and large, seemed compelled to paint Islam in the worst possible colours to justify its endeavours and possibly to explain the lack of success. Islam was an enemy, and an antagonist from which nothing good could be expected and which needed to be defeated. This militant attitude shared the same boldness, aggression, and Spirit of conquest as the colonial venture (Pikkert 2008:31).

Karl Pfander, a German known to be the first great polemic apologist against Islam, wrote "The Balance of the Truth" in 1829 at the age of twenty-six. Even though polite in tone, Pfander called on Muslims to choose between Muhammad and Christ, citing freely from the Qur'an, hadith, and biographies of Prophet Muhammad (in Pikkert 2008:50).

Pikkert goes on to say,

The writings of Pfander, Tisdall, et al., as well of the early Zwemer, reflect many of the assumptions prevalent among missionaries of the era: Muslims worship a different God, Muhammad was an insincere opportunist, certainly during his Medinan period, and controversy, so long as done politely, was a suitable method of Muslim evangelism. Islam and Christianity were perceived as rival civilisations; with Islam on the decline, (one of Zwemer's books during this period was entitled *The Disintegration of Islam*, 1915. This decline, it was held, would open the way for the spreading of the gospel in Muslim countries (Pikkert 2008:51).

Adding to the lack of consideration inherent in the polemic approach, characteristically, the missionary community switched to Western ways; they often reinforced negative descriptions of Muslims. Their theological convictions and depictions of Islam acted as the driving force behind the most common arguments that Christian apologists made against Islam. Most of their magazines aimed at destabilising Islam by displaying Christianity as more authentic. Using Qur'anic references to the Torah and Gospels, missionaries maintain in their publications that the Christian Bible is the true Word of God and Jesus is the divine Lord and Saviour (Wood, 2008: 103-198). They also challenged the authority of the Qur'an and the

established practices of the prophet Muhammad, questioning his prophetic calling and moral integrity and by stressing the sinless nature of Jesus Christ (Smith 1998:362).

Western missionaries, besides targeting the authenticity of Islamic texts and traditions, also upheld the moral preeminence of Christianity by portraying Islam as a religion that mistreats women and advances by the sword (Khalaf, 1997:222). Conversely, Womack (2015:98) argues that these arguments from the missionaries' opinion of the Bible as the only authoritative religious text and their supposition that other religions could be proven void and unreliable if they did not conform to a Western cultural sense of morality.

Additionally, while these missionaries employed such arguments against Islam far into the twentieth century, Weitbrecht (1911:112-115) penned that at the Lucknow conference in 1911 a number of speakers emphasised the need for respectful engagement with Muslims, centred upon love rather than confrontation. Representing uncommon openness to non-Christian religions, Gairdner's (1909:130) work during this period similarly stood out for its clear retreat from the hostile missionary polemics of the nineteenth century. Rather than echoing the pejorative characterisations of Islam and the prophet Muhammad put forth by earlier missionaries, Gairdner (1909:131) affirms in his persuasive book, that "what Mohammad experienced belongs only to him who feels that God has laid on to him with Will and with power." So, that he was prompted to adore God. He went on to liken Muhammad's experience to the fourth-century conversion of Saint Augustine (ibid). Gairdner further condemns the negative perspectives of his contemporaries on other religions and has advocated for the recognition of the positive spiritual values in Islam "while maintaining the specificity of the Christian message." This instance has prefigured the more comprehensive theologies of religion that emerged from missionary theologians later in the twentieth century (Womack, 2015:98-99). However, some of them were unwilling to put up with even simple cultural methods (Pikkert, 2008:70). In other words, there was lack of contextualisation,

which was either theological or cultural in the characteristics of missions of the first period.

Pikkert (2008:71) further states,

Pfander began a tradition of tit-for-tat attacks, arguments and polemics, which raises important questions about the value of purely religious debate and the role of apologetics in Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Indeed, the lack of response to the evangelism approaches of the day as well as government limitations led the Christian denominations to do Mission in Muslim countries during the nineteenth century to turn to evangelisation of members of the current orthodox churches. Pikkert says that this “Great Experiment” called and aimed at reaching Muslims with the gospel through “reforming and reviving the Eastern Church” (ibid:41). These evangelism efforts caused splits rather than regeneration in the ancient church. Furthermore, Pikkert (2008:60) affirms that most missionaries who were often prohibited from ministering to Muslims ended up ministering to those Orthodox Christians who came out from the ancient tradition to form Western style “evangelical churches”. Even if the “Great Experiment” was unsuccessful in reaching out to Muslims with the Gospel in the nineteenth century, the descendants of those who were converted from the orthodox faith led the way in missions to Muslims in the twentieth century. In terms of outreach to the Digo tribe, this was not the case.

Groves (1955:53) indicates that when the Germans colonised Tanzania in 1885, a Protestant Mission society, the “Berlin Evangelical Missionary Society” (Berlin III), was established in 1886 to start Mission work in German East Africa. In 1887, it founded its first Mission station in Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania. It also established an additional Mission station in Tanga and started outreach projects with the Digo people in Tanzania. In Kenya and Tanzania, the missionary work among the Digo began around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the twentieth century. This led to the conversion of a few Digo families, whose descendants are the Christians in Digoland today.

### **3.1.5 The period of colonialism and nationalism (1919-1946)**

It was after the conclusion of the First World War that missiologists began to question the polemic approach. Out of the Enlightenment, new social science disciplines emerged, stressing the study of society, culture, and comparative religion. Pikkert (2008:80-81) discusses the new reasoning:

The scholarly examination of other religions by theologically conservative thinkers led to a new appreciation of their inner genius. With respect to Islam, the contributions of Temple Gairdner, Samuel M. Zwemer, Hendrick Kraemer and others would lead to a re-evaluation of the host culture's values as well as a revision of evangelical missiological praxis.

This re-evaluation brought about new Mission strategies for the Muslim world.

Pikkert indicates that Zwemer and Gairdner insisted on the need for proper views of the atonement and the incarnation (2008:82). Pikkert (ibid) also argued for “a sympathetic understanding of Islam and of Christianity's reaction to it without compromising their own Mission and message.” Guralnik (1970:744) states that this “Irenic” (which means promoting peace) method sought to reach Muslims with the Gospel with minimal offence while appreciating their culture (:94). Eddy (in Pikkert 2008:91), contrasts the approaches:

What plan are we to follow? The methods of argument, debate, contrast and comparison on the one hand, and on the other the method of loving approach along lines of least resistance, not to contrast one religion with another but to bring every man face-to-face with Jesus Christ and let Him make His own winsome appeal. The old method not only seemed natural to us but often seemed to be forced on us by the Moslem Himself ... If we won the argument, we were all the more certain to lose the man.

During this period, the first wide attempts at the method of evangelism with Muslims known as contextualisation arose. Gairdner (in Pikkert, 2008:98-100) argues for not just alterations in externals such as clothing and the way of conduct, but also adaptations to their devotional life, including forms of adoration and music. Pikkert further mentions that the veterans taught that only new persons in Christ were able to present a fresh message to the Muslim world (2008:101). Zwemer and Gairdner (2008:56) were known to be the veterans because they

crossed portions of both the imperial and colonial ages of missions to Muslims. The fresh approach to missions encouraged the first widespread use of Islamic Arabic vocabulary in missionary publications (Pikkert 2008:103) and stressed the power of prayer to overcome demonic forces (Pikkert 2008:104). Nevertheless, many missionaries during this period disparaged the so called soft approach towards Islam and sustained the polemic approaches of the nineteenth century (ibid:100).

### **3.1.6 The period of the rise of the Arab world (1947-1978)**

During this period, Protestant evangelism to Muslims mired due to an important event that rocked the Muslim world. In 1947, Israel achieved statehood, resulting in the displacement of a substantial number of Palestinian refugees. The support of Israel by nations of the West infuriated Muslims all over the world, ushering in, the period of Islamic fundamentalism (Ahmed, 2002:134). Cragg, Ahmed and Pikkert (1985:24; 2001:137 and 2008:119) assert that the post-war retreat of colonialism and the perceived chastening of Palestine awakened resurgent Pan-Arab nationalism. According to the researcher, even non-Arabic Muslims sympathised with the Palestinian cause at this time. Pikkert (2008:124) indicates many Muslim majority nations maintained Islam's belief in their favoured destiny due to the newfound oil wealth. This new awareness scattered the seed for the Islamic revitalisation that would escalate in the concluding decades of the twentieth century.

By this time, a number of independent Mission agencies, for example, the Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ International existed in the Muslim world and they continued their Mission work with new groups. These agencies linked with the main denominations already on Mission in the Muslim world. They included Operation Mobilisation, Middle East Christian Outreach, Red Sea Mission Team (RSMT), North Africa Mission, The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), Gospel Missionary Union, and Youth with a Mission. The propagation of such new agencies led to the sending of young Christian missionaries into the



Muslim world who were more willing to go and experiment with new methods than those from mainline denominations. As the number of expatriates increased in large cities in the Muslim world, a network of evangelical international churches emerged to minister to the necessities of these new dwellers (Pikkert 2008:124). Because of this, virtually every major Muslim city already had a body of international worshipers.

According to Pikkert (2008:128-130), during this period, missionaries continued with the ancillary work of Mission such as medical care, education, literature, social centres, and humanitarian relief. Through these ministries, they succeeded in gaining access to many Muslims. Despite this, apologists retained the debate approach of Christian witness; but others developed a new method known as “dialogue” (ibid). Schlorff (2006) calls this debate approach in the twentieth century the “direct approach.” Having its beginnings in the nineteenth century, the argumentative and polemic approach continued in the course of this period. Pikkert (2008:134) writes that Josh McDowell famously debated the late Ahmed Deedat in 1981. Others, such as Jay Smith (Deconstructing, 2010), continue the approach presently. Many missiologists believe that such approaches harden existing positions and hinder effective Muslim evangelism (Schlorff 2006:58). In spite of these uncertainties, there are many advocates of Smith’s debate<sup>16</sup> approach (ibid).

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<sup>16</sup> I believe that as much as the debate method may prove to be effective in some places, it is generally not a good approach for reaching Muslims with the Gospel. Many disadvantages accompany it. In 2007, when I was working for the Adventist Muslim Relations in the coastal region of Kenya, and as the Muslim evangelism coordinator for the Seventh-day Adventist church, I visited a frontline Adventist missionary evangelist in *Ukunda* on the South Coast near Mombasa, Kenya. This evangelist was ministering to a very unreceptive Digo Muslim people. During my visit in order to learn how he was doing in his ministry in the region, I asked him about his approach in doing mission work with this people of another faith, Muslims, as he had already a few converts with him who were helping do his ministry. He told me that his method was debating. He told Digo Muslims that Muhammad was a false prophet, who had lied to many Muslims. He also told them that Islam is the wrong religion, and that those who follow it are going to Hell. As I inquired more, he stated firmly that his work in the area was to tell people the truth, nothing less! He encountered many problems, however. Sometimes, when he won the debate, the Muslims would try to kill him. Most of the time, his life was threatened. However, according to Pikkert, in spite of the shortcomings in this approach, converts to Christ do result from the polemic approach (2008:72).

Cragg terms the dialogue approach as a diametrically opposite method, calling for Muslim and Christian unity in Christ Jesus. The dialogue approach presents Christianity as not out to replace Islam but rather to fulfill what is already there (Schlorff 2006:20). Cragg, (in Schlorff 2006:21) says:

This involves the principle of open religion; Christianity and an Islam open not just to a clearer understanding of their own sources but also to truth from other sources and perspectives. Yet Christ represents in some sense the fulfillment of both.

Dialogue exemplifies the most indirect of approaches, and has been embraced by the World Council of Churches, with its condemnation of proselytism (Schlorff 2006:22). A hermeneutic of recognising Qur'anic truth has led to relativism and an ensuing weak witness to Muslims. In spite of their good intentions, both dialogue and debate cause more problems than they solve. Pikkert (2008:187) asserts:

Interreligious [dialogue] is also at a theological impasse. Muslims have real difficulty with the fact that Christians are reluctant to accept the authenticity of Muhammad as a post-Christ prophet who received a major message from heaven (Nasr 1996-97:13). Christians, on the other hand, feel that Muslims' recognition of Jesus does not really cost them anything, while a corresponding recognition of Mohammad by Christians would go against everything they are told by the weightiest religious documents in their possession (Zebiri 2000:5). Thus, instead of leading to mutual understanding, discord between Christians and Muslims has been growing, with many Christians, once again, portraying Islam as the last great enemy to be conquered (2008:187).

However, in Kenya, it is not strange to find Christians, Muslims and traditionalists living in harmony with one another in the same family upbringing. On the other hand, this harmony is at many times endangered by a few extremist groups of either Muslims or Christians. Mombo and Mwaluda say that dialogue as an approach of doing Mission to Muslims needs to be positioned alongside patience as another way of Christians and Muslims living with one another in accord (Mombo and Mwaluda 2008:38). They argue that dialogue is not just tolerance; rather it is a frank examination and a humble approach in a combined forum. It is as well an endeavour to provide respect by listening cautiously to the views of the neighbour, irrespective of the tensions that might arise from the discussions (ibid). Currently, dialogue

between Christianity and Islam often turns out to mean Christians speaking among themselves about Islam, and Muslims speaking among themselves about Christianity.

Eissler points out that what is required as an integral part of a promising future development of Christian-Muslim dialogue is a move from the simply “*horizontal*” view of the representatives of organisations, denominations, interreligious groups and initiatives with their respective themes and agendas in the dialogue to an impartial “*vertical*” insight. In other words, there is indeed a need of an intra-religious dialogue, which would bring about a deep and relaxed valuation in the acceptable hypothetical context of the now often unclearly stated and controversially discussed beliefs (2008:180).

Moucarry (2010:93) affirms dialogue by defining it as “a deliberate effort to engage genuinely and respectfully with each other; a willingness to listen and understand; a readiness to learn and be challenged; a desire to relate to, communicate with and be understood by one another.”

Western Christians for many centuries either disregarded; or confronted the Muslim world. In this present time, Muslims are no longer disregarded, since the world has become a “global village” which means Christians and Muslims living peacefully next to each other is no longer an option. In many instances, some Christians strive to reach out to Muslims with the gospel in confrontation, attacking Islam in a war of words. This method usually stimulates Muslims to become more entrenched in their beliefs and frequently incites an attacking response. Christianity even more fervidly (Moucarry 2010) offends Muslims. In the United States of America (USA), for instance, Bodman (2008) indicates that their history seems to give a good foundation for a healthy and rich dialogue between Christians and Muslims. However, he observes this dialogue in the USA as indeed healthy and not rich. The Christians and Muslims meet, talk, and share coffee and stories. Christians and Muslims work side by side to build homes for the poor. Christians and Muslims sing and pray together at interfaith

services, but do not truly know one another (2008:42). On the other hand, Naim (1998:31) observes that Muslim and Christian dialogue is a conversation between “Islam, a faith without history, and Christianity, a history without faith”. These words give a clear perspective about the nature of dialogue between Christians and Muslims in America (Bodman 2008:42).

In the South Coast of Kenya, Digoland, dialogue between Christians and Muslims frequently takes the form of apologetics for at least two reasons. Firstly, Christians and Muslims have disagreements about God’s revelation, which for the Christian reached its peak in Jesus and for the side Muslims, in the Qur’an. Secondly, Islam admits the Christian religion is God-given, whereas at the same time, it denies the main principles of the gospel such as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and His divinity<sup>17</sup>. The main response for Christian apologetics on these issues is often about giving a “defence” of their faith to those who attack it (1 Peter 3:15). This, nevertheless, should be presented with “gentleness, respect, and wisdom.” Even when the debate becomes heated, Christian defenders must abstain from arguments, personal attacks, and scornful words about Muslims and their religion Islam. Wietzke (1991:21) points out that honest dialogue confirms that neither Christians nor Muslims are able to disregard their distinctive differences or to reach some kind of synthesis on a higher level. Christians or Muslims have to stay faithful to the core of their own belief, have to challenge or even reject the position of the other.

Frederiks (2010:1) states that when evaluating Africa’s recent trends in Christian-Muslim relations, there is a shift from “let us forget our differences” to “let us understand our differences and live with those differences in harmony”. This is a principle, which can be used effectively as a characteristic for current developments in African interfaith relationships. The plan for enhancing Christian-Muslim relations in Sub-Saharan Africa

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<sup>17</sup> I observed this kind of approach as I coordinated mission work in the area of Digoland.

seems to have changed from stressing information and intellectual dialogues, to reducing shared tensions and emphasising the necessity for joint social action despite differences which exist between them (Frederiks, 2010:1). Bodman (2008) argues that the patterns of dialogue that have emerged are, mostly, still hesitant, searching, protective, but nevertheless compelling. He further points out that the principles of dialogue are to enhance relationships among the Christian community and objectively learn about the Islamic tradition.

Additionally, this could enable Christians to address specific community subjects, such as poverty and tolerance, collectively in the larger community as people of faith.

Avakian (2015) says that the method of scriptural reasoning arose at the close of the twentieth century, highlighting the need for communal dialogue and moving beyond the history of interfaith conflicts. This reasoning helped particularly as one considered the interfaith dialogue as an inescapable demand in the contemporary pluralistic world of religions, with Christianity and Islam largely dominating. Through scriptural reasoning, the followers of different religious traditions such as Christians and Muslims come to read their holy books together in the context of friendship, honesty, and hospitality. As a result, this makes theological and philosophical reasoning and argumentation a better understanding of one's own religious tradition possible, while striving towards a sincere encounter with the other.

Fawzy (2000) as well outlines four principles of dialogue, which show significance in Christian-Muslim relations. He states that: 1) dialogue begins when people meet people. Thus, dialogue should proceed in terms of people of other faiths rather than of theoretical impersonal systems. 2) dialogue depends on mutual understanding and trust. This involves meeting people of other faiths, listening carefully to their accounts of faith and sharing with them an account of our faith. 3) dialogue makes it possible to share in service within communities. This is the dialogue that seeks to build community. It is people from different

faiths coming together to address common problems. 4) Dialogue becomes the means of authentic witness. In other words, if Christians go into dialogue with a steady commitment to Jesus Christ, dialogue provides opportunity for authentic witness, since dialogue involves communication and relationship with the other.

Ariarajah argues that, currently, dialogue programmes within Christianity and Islam have not sufficiently addressed the theological ideas around which the two faiths divide. These ideas are the ones, which determine the self-understanding of each of the faith communities and their approaches towards each other. Those ideas of self-understanding often inhibit a peaceable relationship between the two religions and God. Dialogue programmes up to the present have been approached as defensive strategies to diminish the level of antagonism and have gradually generated benevolence while avoiding conversation by touching on basic sources of the underlying conflict. For instance, any issues considered as potential threats to the prevailing self-understandings of the two major communities of faith, or seen as having the potential of resulting in accusation because of self-understanding and actions, have been avoided (Ariarajah, 2002). This level of opposition to self-exposure and confrontation over doctrine, brought about fear that dialogue would result in syncretism or that it would compromise faith in the exclusivity and conclusiveness of the revelation in Christ Jesus. It could as well lead to the fear of losing church authority and thus result in many organisations, including institutions of the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, tertiary theological teaching institutions and principal authorities of many religious bodies and denominations, issuing guidelines for dialogue that have been definitely and inflexibly reactionary (ibid). Ariarajah (2002) further pennes that:

Within the ecumenical family, interfaith dialogue will continue to remain a profoundly important, if controversial, issue. The challenge it brings to the ecumenical movement is far-reaching. It summons the church to seek a new self-understanding in its relation to other religions. It requires it to look for deeper

resources to deal with the reality of plurality, and it calls the church to new approaches to Mission and witness.

In addition, Ariarajah (2002) continues with his observation by saying that:

Suspicion of interfaith dialogue among some Christians surfaced in the open controversy at the World Council of Churches (WCC's) fifth assembly (Nairobi 1975). For the first time, five persons of other faiths were invited to a WCC assembly as special guests and took part in the discussions of the section on 'Seeking Community,' where the dialogue issue was debated. Plenary discussion of the report of this section highlighted the deep disagreement within the church on the issue of dialogue. Fears were expressed that dialogue would lead to the kind of syncretism against which the 1928 Jerusalem meeting warned, or that it would compromise faith in the uniqueness and finality of the revelation in Christ, or that it would threaten Mission seen as fundamental to the being of the church itself."

In some cases, as it has been portrayed here, the fear of losing ecclesiastical authority because of discussing concepts of religious faiths has hindered dialogue. In other cases, it is clear that the dialogue has aided in enhancing relationships within the Christian and the Muslim faiths. Following the laid down procedures, the dialogue can be one of the good approaches to help people of different faiths understand each other and have good relationships. There should be no relaxation on the need for good and wise guidelines for dialogue programmes. If well adhered to, they can bear positive fruits between Christians and Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.1.7 The period of Islamic fundamentalism (1979- current)**

Esposito and Mogahed (2007), mention that in the course of the last thirty years, governments have obligated to resurgent Islam and have replaced secular regimes in many countries with a Muslim majority. Wheatcroft points out that from the time of the Iranian revolution of 1979, Iran, Palestine, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia and Sudan all feature governments drawing their support from Islamic revival (2004:301). Religious

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<sup>18</sup> I witnessed this as we had an open public dialogue (*Mjadala*) in the Ukunda South Coast of Kenya in 2007. At the beginning, it was not easy from the Muslims' side, but as we sat together, planned and came up with guidelines for the dialogue, things started to work well as we followed the procedures laid down. At the end, there was a good result in terms of relationships.

fundamentalism is increasingly influencing the people of Saudi Arabia (Sookdheo, 2007).

Pikkert (2008) affirms that two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the persisting Palestinian war with Israel has caused many people in the Muslim world to toughen their resistance against acceptance of Christianity.

Pikkert (2008) further records that there is an increasing number of missionaries arriving in the Muslim countries from South America, and from Asian countries like South Korea and China. These young missionaries demonstrate more of a willingness to test new methods of evangelism. Debate, dialogue, social centres, literature, and relief missions are still used although they are considered older approaches. Newer approaches such as tent-making evangelism are now used in Muslim countries where tentmakers use secular skills such as business entrepreneurialism for the purpose of Christian witness in order to enter nations not open to Christian evangelists or missionaries. The Apostle Paul is an example of this in Acts 18:1-3, where he is said to be working as a tentmaker with Priscilla and Aquila while ministering in the city of Corinth. Other new methods as mentioned by Pikkert (2008) are the use of technologies such as radio, satellite television, and the Internet, which have greatly accelerated the spread of the Gospel.

Similarly, Pikkert (2008: 175,187) indicates that advancement in the social sciences in the early part of the twentieth century led Christian missionaries to experiment with new approaches in reaching out to Muslims with the Gospel. According to Schlorff (2006:26)), this has led to the development of new methods, which are contextualised to Muslims.

Schlorff (2006:25) states:

The most important influence behind these changes has been the social sciences and especially the increasing number of missionary scholars trained in these disciplines. I include here cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics, translation theory, and communication science. These have changed evangelical attitudes about culture and non-Christian religions and have revolutionised the evangelical missionary enterprise through the infusion of new ideas. The explosion of missiological studies by evangelicals in recent years has been nothing short of phenomenal.



In analysing and giving justification for contextualising the gospel for Muslims, much consideration to contextualisation techniques, applicability and feasibility with folk Muslims, the classification of the Digo people of the South Coast of Kenya is given. I.C. Brown says “no custom is ‘odd’ to the people who practice it” (in Van Pelt, 1984:17). On the basis that as evangelists encounter diverse cultures in their Mission fields, they ponder how best to communicate the Gospel message to Muslims. Hence, the term contextualisation usually defines this process. The deeper explanation of this term is only as it relates to African traditional religions and folk Islam. Byang H. Kato states that contextualisation means “making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation” (in Hesselgrave and Rommen 2000:33). Bruce Nicholas says that contextualisation is:

.... the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate culture and within their particular existential situations (in Hesselgrave and Rommen, 2000:33).

George Peter affirms that this term contextualisation be defined based on proper exegesis of the Biblical text in order to be authentic (in Hesselgrave 2000:34). Hesselgrave and Rommen explains the misperception over the word contextualisation for evangelical Christians. He articulates that contextualisation is:

... but only a series of proposals, all of them vying for acceptance ... It is not incumbent upon them to agree on the precise wording of a definition, but it is essential that they agree on the criteria necessary for an authentic Biblical contextualisation, that they be able to *differentiate among defensible and deviant suggestions (Italics not original)*, and that they actually contextualise the gospel and theology in ways that will commend themselves both to God and to their hearers (ibid:35).

In spite of the disagreement on the precise definition of contextualisation, missiologists favour the idea when strengthened by Biblical truth. Hesselgrave (in Van Rheenen, 2006:4) states that,

... Acceptable contextualisation is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The results of this process may vary in form and

intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of the meaning prescribed by the Biblical text.

Schlorff (2006:25-26) provides more information on this new method of contextualisation, saying that with more stress on learning vernacular languages and identifying with culture, the new contextualised Christian missionaries have set their sights on Islamic forms. Instead of using the Qur'an exclusively as a foil for disproving Islam, the new approach has initiated a search for linguistic "bridges" within the Qur'an. The model they are using adopted the following principle:

On the assumption that Islamic culture is a neutral vehicle, Islam is considered a legitimate starting point for contextualisation. This means that, in theology, Qur'anic passages may be used as a theological starting point or source of truth for the gospel (e.g., trying to prove the crucifixion on the basis of certain Qur'anic passages). (Schlorff 2006:26).

In the Qur'an, many passages feature phrases and refer to characters that appear Biblical at first glance. This common ground frequently entices Christians to choose "proof texts" from the Qur'an to support their Christian creeds. Even though the Qur'an denies Jesus' divinity (Sura 5:17, 72, 75; 9:30-1) and rejects the Trinity (Sura 4:171; 5:73, 116), some Christians who favour this method often lean to Qur'anic teaching to reflect their own presumptions. Schlorff (2006:63-64) describes these apologists' diplomacy.

There are however, a number of passages that Christians have taught other than the traditional Muslim interpretation. As we have seen, the Qur'an calls Him "the Word of God" and "a Spirit from Him" (4:171; 3:45). It has Him born of a virgin (19:16-35) and calls Him "illustrious (wajjih) in this world and the next, and among those closest to God" (3:45). He is the only prophet who is said to have created, and to have raised the dead (3:49). And of all the prophets, including Mohammad, Christ is never said to have sinned (see 3:36; 20:121; 71:29; 14:41; 28:15-16; 4:106; 40:55; 48:2). Finally, in a usage that is reminiscent of some Old Testament language, in many a sura we find the pronoun "we" or other plural forms used in reference to God (e.g., 2:35; 3:25, etc., *et passim*). Traditionally Muslims have interpreted these passages in line with the totality of Qur'anic teaching. They view the "we" passages to be the Semitic "plural of majesty," also found in the Bible.

The method of utilising the Qur'an as a "bridge" to communicate the gospel to Muslims involves at least two concerns. The first being, it makes Christians appear insincere

for quoting the Qur'an and asserting the verses to mean something not satisfactory to conventional Islam. For example, Cragg (1985:257) indicates that Christians do not appreciate Muslim apologists identifying Muhammad in the Qur'an sura 61:6 as the "other Comforter" of John 14:16. Similarly, conversant Muslims stumble when Christians thrust Qur'anic words into odd Christian interpretations. Schlorff (2006:131) puts it right by saying:

While we cannot prevent Muslims from interpreting the Bible Islamically, we must nevertheless expose the fallacy and error in such an enterprise. If, however, we ourselves read Christian meaning into the Qur'an, we do not have a leg to stand on.

Secondly, while a missionary's argument may contain references to Christ with logical perceptions in portions of the Qur'an, the Christian unknowingly confers unspoken approval of the entire Qur'an. Once more, Schlorff (2006:131) says to the issue that:

Those who use the "proof text" method usually deny that it implies accepting the Qur'an's authority. We only quote it, they say, as one would quote any text to prove a point, because it is authoritative to Muslims. The argument is fallacious, however. The doctrines that they attempt to prove from the Qur'an concerning the divine authority of the Bible, the deity of the Christ, and the Trinity are truths that, according to the Bible, are available to man only by divine revelation (Eph. 3:2-11; Col. 1:26-27)<sup>19</sup>. One could even go so far as to say that it is being dishonest to oneself as well as to Muslims.

Cultural contextualisation with Muslims is another issue that is presently practised.

Cultural and religious elements are inseparable in Muslim societies. Muslims impeccably blend these elements together in their daily cultural and religious activities. According to the researcher, besides the issues of Qur'anic contextualisation, much has been said about contextualisation issues particularly in relation to Muslim culture and their accompanying worship forms. However, theological and doctrinal dilemmas often surface due to the close link between form and meaning in Islam.

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<sup>19</sup> Using Qur'anic quotes in support of particular Biblical teachings and at the same time rejecting that this can imply an approval of its divine authority, causes contradictions and makes no logical sense at all.

Muslim customs are pervasive of Islamic culture that excites anybody living in a country with a more traditional Muslim majority. Men and women in Kenya wear a more Western style presently, except in areas with a Muslim majority, where some Muslim men wear the flowing white robes and women wear the flowing black dresses with their head and face covered. This practice is mostly seen in Mombasa, a region with Muslim dominance. Even though most Muslims in some countries dress in a more Western style, for instance in Egyptian cities, Jordan, Turkey, and Syria (Wheatcroft, 2004), their fellow people in the countryside prefer the more traditional fashions. The Digo people of the South Coast of Kenya fall into this category, being more traditional in their dress.

The concept of contextualising culture, custom and dress antedates recent missions. Kane (1982) indicates that in the nineteenth century William Carey exhibited gratitude for Indian clothing, while Anderson (1998) mentions Hudson Taylor to have further adopted the Chinese national custom and dress. This also prompted the leadership of the pietistic Moravian movement in the earlier Eighteenth Century to begin to make change; thus, they instigated attempts at contextualisation (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 2000).

For example, Count Nikolas von Zinzendorf advised his missionaries in Greenland not to use the terms “Lamb” and “sacrifice” since there were no lambs on Greenland, and Greenland religion knew no sacrifices. He was convinced by using terms which were outside the conceptual framework of the listeners, the process of communication would be complicated and bear undesirable fruit. “If we are not careful,” said Zinzendorf, “we will, with the passing of time, have them reciting the Psalms in Latin” (Hesselgrave and Rommen 2000:26).

Currently, Christian missionary workers, with some exceptions, appreciate the dress, customs, and food of the societies they serve. Even though all cultures value outsiders’ appreciation of their cooking, investigation should be made before adopting certain national dress styles, particularly in Islamic societies. For example, Braswell (1996:62-63) argues that Muslims wash ceremonially before prayer and this ritual encompasses religious meaning.

There are differing sentiments regarding contextualisation in dress. In some Muslim countries, such as Pakistan and Egypt, Western women who cover themselves in the way of the natives can effectively avoid male harassment. In other countries, such as Kenya in the region of Mombasa with a Muslim majority, and in Jordan, women could feel at ease in modest Western clothing. Male missionary workers similarly face problems on the issue of national dress. Since many Western-oriented natives wear European style clothing within Muslim majority countries, some natives wonder about the reason behind a foreigner dressing in an Islamic manner. Occasionally a missionary dressed in native clothing looks odd to the people of that specific community. Rather than acculturating, the missionary merely succeeds in drawing undesirable attention. At times contextualisation calls for a careful approach, even if done superficially.<sup>20</sup>

Cultural contextualisation of Islamic forms, currently has been a matter of concern in majority Muslim countries. Due to the sluggishness of Muslim missions over the last two centuries, Christian missionaries started discovering inventive approaches of outreach. Over the last thirty-five years, much generated controversy has emerged due to a move of contextualising Christianity within Islam by Christian workers. Kraft (1978) practised the idea of “dynamic equivalency” to the discipline of Missiology, which was particularly, a dynamic equal to the version of Islam advocating conversion to Christianity while remaining within the Muslim faith culture. This kind of model is known as the “insider movement.” The insider movement supports remaining within Islam while accepting Isa Messiah. Greear (2010:153) affirms “they want to see movements to Jesus within Islam rather than from Islam. These are called insider movements.” Lewis (2009:673) says, “insider movements can

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<sup>20</sup> I noticed this instance in many occasions while working in the South Coast of Kenya, Digoland. Western evangelists from different denominations came into the area and tried to adopt the Digo native Islamic dress; this brought about a hilarious outcome. It looked strange and suspicious, at other times. It is quite difficult for a foreign missionary to contextualize Muslim dressing, in my own observation.

be defined as movements to obedient faith in Christ that remain integrated with or inside their natural community.” This practice within Islamic cities is a model of the recent phenomenon of Hebrew Christians remaining in Judaism, calling themselves Messianic Jews (Schlorff 2006). John Travis (1998:125)<sup>21</sup> argues that, “in the past four decades, tens of thousands of Jews have accepted Jesus as their Messiah yet remain socio-religiously Jewish.” In a similar way, Brown indicates that the insider movement advocates “Messianic Muslims” acknowledging “Isa the Messiah” while retaining their Islamic cultural identity (2007:8).

The ‘C- Continuum functions as a frame of reference for discoursing matters linked to the insider movement by both exponents and antagonists of varying degrees of Muslim contextualisation. In order to distinguish between the diverse levels of Muslim contextualisation, the following scale was developed by Travis. Thus, a practical summarised version of the C-Continuum instrument for describing six types of “Christ-centred communities” as found in the Muslim framework (Brown, Travis, Adams, and Allan 2009: 664-665) is explained in the following paragraph.

First, Travis says that the C-1 Continuum represents a traditional church that uses a language that is different from the daily language of the surrounding Muslim community. This may be Roman Catholics, Orthodox or Protestants. Some of these antedate Islam’s formation. Currently, in Muslim countries, thousands of C-1 churches are found there. Many of these churches mirror a Western culture. A big cultural gap frequently occurs between the church and the surrounding Muslim community. In some cases, some Muslim background believers may be found in C-1 churches. The believers of C-1 identify themselves as Christians.

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<sup>21</sup> John Travis is a pen name for a Christian worker in Asia who has been involved in contextualized Muslim ministry since 1987 (Travis, 1998:664). He is known to be one of the foremost supporters of the insider movement.

The second is the C-2 Continuum. This represents a traditional church that uses the daily language of the surrounding Muslim community (Brown, Travis, Adams, and Allan 2009 :664). Principally, C-2 is similar to that of C-1 excluding the use of language. In other words, C-1 and C-2 churches and Christian workers are termed as being culturally distinct from the Islamic locale in which they are situated except that those at the C-2 level use the local language, without Islamic forms. There are a few Muslim background believers in these churches, but enormous acquisitions of Muslims to these churches are deemed practically improbable due to the cultural abyss separating these churches from the Islamic culture. Contextualists refer to this method as “traditional” evangelism, and the literature describes such a method as unsuccessful and undesirable (Coleman and Verster, 2006:103-104).

The third is the C-3 where the contextualised community uses the daily language of the surrounding Muslim community and some of the non-Muslim cultural forms (Travis, 2009). C-3 believers are known to be still clinging to a “traditional” Christian service, even though their churches use Islamic terms as well as certain cultural elements in their worship of Allah (God). In their services, they religiously use neutral forms that may comprise folk music, ethnic dress, artwork, etc. According to the researcher, some Islamic elements are “filtered out” in order to use purely “cultural” forms, thus targeting to reduce the foreignness of the gospel and the church by contextualising to Biblically adequate cultural forms. The C-3 believer may congregate in a church building or a more religiously neutral place. The congregations of C-3 Continuum are comprised of a majority of Muslim background believers, calling themselves “Christian believers.”

Fourth is the C-4 Continuum, where contextualised community uses the daily language and Biblically acceptable socio-religious Islamic forms (Travis, 2009). It is the same as that of C-3, though Biblically acceptable religious forms of Islam and practices are as well used, for example, keeping the fast, praying with raised hands, utilising Islamic

terminologies and dress. Believers and missionaries are as well encouraged to adopt Islamic lifestyle elements such as refraining from pork and alcohol, and having dogs as pets.. In this level, foreign forms are avoided. Meetings for worship services are not conducted in church buildings. The C-4 societies almost exclusively are comprised of Muslim background believers. This group of C-4 believers is viewed by the Muslim community as a kind of Christian. C-4 community believers classify themselves as “followers of Isa the Messiah” or something similar. C-4 methods use cultural and Islamic forms like C-3. The liturgy of C-4 churches closely reflects reinterpreted Islamic forms (Coleman and Verster, 2006:104).

Fifth is the C-5 Community of Muslim believers who follow Jesus and yet remain culturally and officially Muslim (Travis 2009). These C-5 believers continue lawfully and socially to be within the community of Islam. Slightly similar to the Messianic Jewish movement, Islamic theological aspects which are not in harmony with the Bible teaching are denied or reinterpreted if possible. At this level, the membership in corporate Islamic worship differs from individual to individual and from group to group. The C-5 believers congregate often with other C-5 believers and share their faith with Muslims that are not saved. The unsaved Muslims might view C-5 believers as theologically different and may ultimately banish them from the Islamic community. C-5 believers are regarded as Muslim believers by the Muslim community and consider themselves as Muslims who follow “Isa the Messiah.”

Sixth is the C-6 community, where secret or underground Muslim followers of Jesus Christ have little or no visibility to the public (Brown, Travis, Adams, and Allan 2009). Actually, this kind of community is similar to the persecuted believers who suffered under totalitarian governments. Because of fear, isolation or threat of extreme community or government, lawful action or reprisal which includes capital punishment, the C-6 community of believers, worship and secretly following Jesus, this is individually done or possibly rarely in small groups. Many are known to come to Christ through radio broadcasts, tracts, miracles,



dreams, visions, Christian witness while in a foreign country, or by reading the Bible on their own initiative. C-6 believers are normally quiet about their faith, which is the opposite of C-5 community. The Islamic community sees the C-6 believers as Muslims and they call themselves Muslims at all times. In the description of the whole continuum of Travis, it is clear that number 1 at the low end of the scale is considered to be an exceptionally low contextualised method whereas number 6 at the other end of the scale would represent the highest, most assimilated levels of contextualisation (Massey 2000: 5-14).

Among the most controversial methods presented by some theologians, practitioners, and scholars as authentic evangelistic approaches and grouped under the overall caption of contextualisation are those proposing that Muslim “converts” to Christianity should remain in the Mosque, continue to exercise Islam, and accept the prophetic function of Muhammad. More controversial still, is the idea by others that missionaries pray at the Mosque, accept the prophetic role of Muhammad, practice the annual fast of Ramadan, and consider formally converting to the Islam religion (Parshall, 1998). The concept of encouraging Muslims to be converted to Christianity and remain in Islam bothers many, both Christian missionaries and natives. Parshall, an exponent of C-4 contextualisation, queries the C-5 approach. He sees problems with Messianic Muslims who worships in the Mosque and partakes in Islamic prayers, which assert Mohammad as a prophet of God (Travis 2009). Therefore, the primary variance between C-4 and C-5 contextualisation encompasses the identity of the believers themselves. Tennent (2006) describes that (*Italics mine*):

Some of what is casually called C-5 in missionary practice is actually C-4. *The central issue, which is usually at stake, is self-recognition.* C-5 believers are fully embedded in the cultural and religious life of Islam. That is why their presence in the Mosque is referred to as an “insider movement,” because they really are insiders. It is even inaccurate to refer to them as MBB [Muslim Background Believers], because, for them, Islam is not in their background, it remains as their primary identity ... Therefore, the *question before us is whether or not there is a concrete case to be made for motivating a C-5 “Muslim” to remain calling Himself or herself as a Muslim*, fully part and parcel of the religious and cultural life of Islam, even after they have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

While the C-4 community of believers may preserve some Muslim cultural forms, both the community and the believers themselves call C-4 practitioners as Christians. Whereas C-4 contextualisation concentrations are on Muslim culture, C-5 practitioners keep real Islamic faith forms. Since C-5 supporters<sup>22</sup> promote Muslim converts remaining within the Islam religion, the controversy has been connected primarily with this method of Muslim contextualisation.

In most literature on contextualisation among Muslims, the C-5 approach is the centre of controversy, and occasionally C-4. Douglass highlights that C4/C5 are the levels at which believers are frequently encouraged, among other controversial practices, to continue remaining in the Mosque and to call themselves Muslims. At times, Christian missionaries are often encouraged to convert to Islam (1994); Mohammed is recognised as a prophet and the Qur'an accepted as one of the holy books. Eenigenburg (1997) points out that C-5 supporters propose two lines of reasoning for their methods. Many, if not more Islamic forms are exchangeable. The assumption is based on reasoning, that Islam is a religion with the same monotheistic and God-motivated origins as Christianity and Judaism (ibid). In spite of all these issues pertaining to contextualisation approaches, it is clear that efforts are being put forward to ensure that, by all means, the gospel is communicated to Muslims in various places of the world. Missionaries from various places have targeted some parts of Africa even during the earlier periods. Although it can be argued that, the historical approaches to evangelising Muslims now in use generally miss the mark with folk Islam<sup>23</sup>. Folk Muslims

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<sup>22</sup> John Travis and more other C-5 supporters do not advocate Christian workers becoming Muslims (or saying they are Muslims to reach Muslims). C-5 is for those who are already within Islam and have been converted to Christ (Christianity) (Travis 2009a:669, Tennent 2006:108).

<sup>23</sup> According to Saal, Folk Islam is a mixture of pristine Islam with the ancient religious traditions and practices of ordinary people (1991:51).

like the Digo need different methods than those used with official Islam<sup>24</sup> because their worldviews are greatly different. These methods mainly treat Muslims as monolithic in connection with their religious beliefs in spite of considerable cultural dissimilarity among them.

### 3.1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has concisely depicted Christians' endeavour at evangelising Muslims. Some of the important concepts of evangelism that trigger the present attempts of sharing the gospel to them as been displayed. However, the focus is specifically on the history of Christian Mission to the Digo tribe of the South Coast of Kenya. The investigation of the historical methods of evangelising Muslims which includes, the period of Portuguese Dominican missionaries (1498-1700), Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann (1844-1875), the Church Missionary Society (1875-1914), the period of the late Ottoman Empire from 1800 to 1918, the period of colonialism and nationalism which ran from 1919 to 1946, the period of the rise of the Arab world from the 1947 to 1978, and the period of Islamic fundamentalism from 1979 to the present period has been fully discussed.

It is clear that the main concern of Christian missionaries was not to teach the native Africans the Christian faith, although there were situations where Africans were converted to Christianity; rather, their main aim was to offer spiritual service to their emigrant monarchs.

Historically, the approach that was used to reach out to the Muslims were crusades that were known to be any of the military voyages commenced by Christian authorities in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries to win the Holy Land from the Muslims. According to the

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<sup>24</sup> By definition, Stewart describes "popular Islam" as practices and beliefs which stand apart from the norms of behavior sanctioned by the '*ulama*' (which means religious authorities) for particular communities (1985:365). Musk as well explains the differences in terminology between the two terms: "oft ensuing dichotomy may be described phenomenologically as one between 'formal', 'official', 'high', 'ideal', or 'theological', religion, and 'informal', 'low', 'non-official', 'popular', or 'folk' religion."

researcher, as Hillenbrand (2007:1) points out that the Crusades from the Western viewpoint were perceived as a series of campaigns driven by yearning on the part of Western European Christians to bring the holy places of Christendom and their protection. The Crusades in general brought about a destructive effect on the Christian relationship with Muslims in Africa and beyond, and hence the believers of the two faiths became more antagonistic to one another.

Due to the hostility between Christians and Muslims, the Digo people as a result were left without any feasible gospel witness up to the year 1700. Hence, the Muslims were left in control of the coast region and wiped out any likelihood of Christian witness during the eighteenth century. The first time that missionaries tried to contextualise the gospel to the Swahili people of East Africa was in 1846; that was after Krapf learned the Swahili language, and translated the whole New Testament into Swahili, and then compiled a dictionary of about 4000 words. In Kenya and Tanzania, the missionary work among the Digo started about the end of the 19th and the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence, this led to the conversion of a few Digo families, whose offspring are the Christians in Digoland today.

Currently, contextualisation approaches are used in sharing the gospel to the Muslims in many parts of the world, in spite of all issues linking to them as explained in this chapter. Nevertheless, efforts are being put forward to ensure that the gospel is proclaimed to Muslims in various places of the world. It is also clear that missionaries from many places have targeted some parts of Africa even during the earlier periods. Even though it can be argued that the above mentioned historical approaches to evangelising Muslims now in use generally miss the mark with folk Islam. Folk Muslims like the Digo need different approaches than those used with official Islam, because their worldviews are significantly different. These approaches mostly treat Muslims as monolithic in connection with their religious beliefs

without considering the cultural differences among the two types of Islam, and then come with the best approach in reaching out to them with the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **CURRENT TRENDS OF MISSION TO DIGO TRIBE**

This chapter scrutinises the data gathered from oral interviews. The study evaluates the current trends regarding the current approaches of Mission to Digo Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. The study used qualitative methods and conducted self-administered interviews on the Muslim background believers (MBBs), church leaders, and frontline evangelists of the seven selected churches. The chapter looks at issues ranging from the demographic distribution of participants to understanding the effectiveness of Mission to Digo folk Muslims.

#### **4.1 MISSION APPROACHES OF THE SELECTED CHURCHES TO THE DIGO TRIBE**

Seven selected Christian churches in the South Coast of Kenya took part in the study. These churches represent some of the churches that are working among the Digo Muslims. The churches represent diversity in their ethnic makeup, church setting, church membership, and the evangelistic approaches that they are using when working with the Digo Muslims. The tables and figures below provide an overview of the seven churches, a summary of the information acquired from the participants concerning their Christian denominations' Mission to the Digo Muslims, their location, and setting. The location of each church was in Kwale County of the South Coast of Kenya, where the majority population were the Digo tribe people.

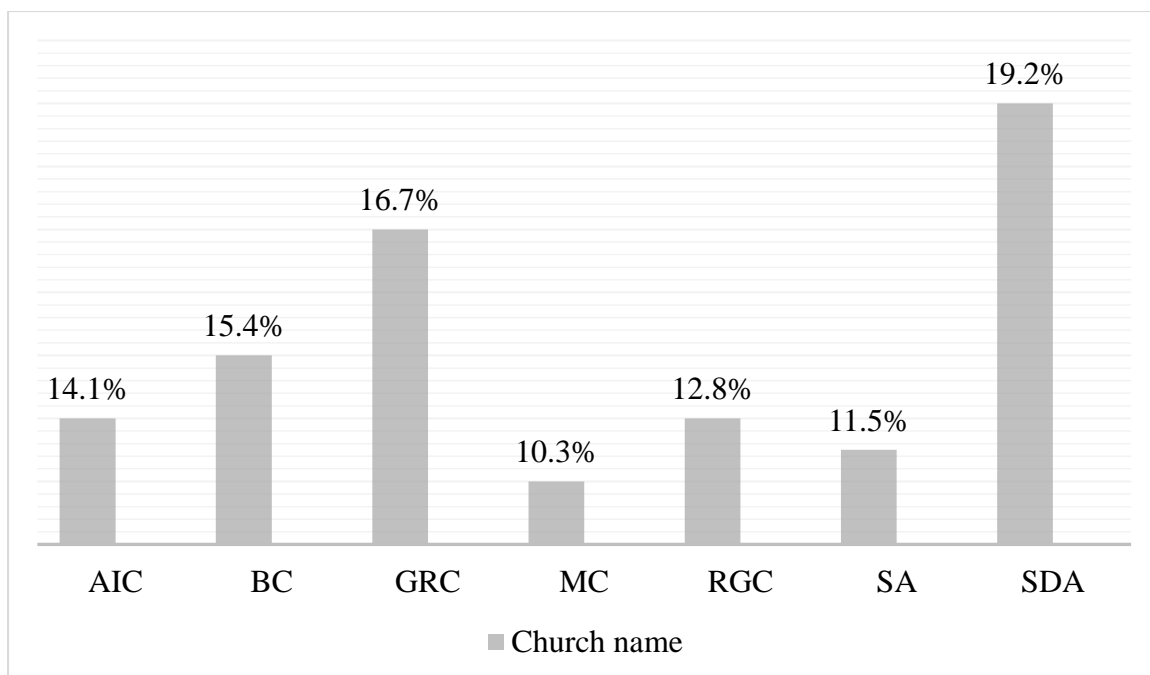
**Table 2: Distribution of the participants according to church denomination**

<b>Church denominations</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
African Inland Church (AIC)	11	14.1
Baptist Church (B.C.)	12	15.4
Gospel Revival Church (GRC)	13	16.7
Methodist Church (MC)	8	10.3
Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC)	10	12.8
Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA)	15	19.2
Salvation Army (SA)	9	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

This information in table 1 above was randomly obtained from the three focus groups from each church. These churches were the MBBs, church leaders and frontline evangelists who were engaging in Mission among the Digo tribe Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. Moreover, the above listed churches were selected due to their involvement in Muslim evangelism in the area. The table displays the distribution according to church denominations. The SDA formed 19.2%, 16.7% were from the GRC, 15.4% belonged to the B.C., 14.1% to the AIC, 12.8% were the RGC, 11.5% consisted of the SA, and finally, 10.3% were the MC.

When classifying the participants according to age and gender from these seven selected churches, the 60% majority comprised of youthful MBB and frontline evangelists; thus, were both men and women. However, the sample consisted of more men than women. The remaining 40% of participants were middle-aged male church leaders and one woman.

**Figure 13: Church denominations distribution percentage**



The variation in figures is due to the variation in sizes of the seven mentioned churches.

Some of them had fewer members than others; however, the difference was not vast..

Moreover, Church growth in this region is slow because of the enormous Muslim presence.

Many Muslims are reported to be resistant to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as they have been for many years (Mijikenda, Digo Kenya: Joshua project,

[https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/11557/KE](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/11557/KE)).



**Table 3: The profile of the selected churches**

Church	Location	Community Demographic	Church Demographic	Church membership
AIC	Kwaletown	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	50
B.C.	Kwale, Golini	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	60
GRC	KwaleJeza A	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	200
MC	Kwaletown	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	210
RGC	KwaleJeza A	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	250
SA	KwaleJeza B	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	20
SDA	KwaleJeza B	Ethnically diverse	Mixed ages and gender	230

#### 4.1.1 African Inland Church (AIC)

This church was founded in 1986 and based in a poor Digo neighbourhood in Kwale town, Kwale County. The church was established to be an institution and instrument for providing a true Christian community, which expresses itself in oneness of fellowship, and in working towards making disciples for Christ among the Digo tribe Muslims. The church believes in worldwide-united witness to the gospel of grace on the part of all believers in Jesus is the greatest need of the world that is lost in sin and unaware that Christ is the only answer to its problems. The AIC is committed to the Great Commission (Matt, 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16), the advancement of the gospel in its totality (Acts, 20:27), the defence and confirmation of the faith (Jude 3) and the fellowship of the gospel (Galatians, 3:28). This church's mission statement is "To fulfill the Great Commission of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

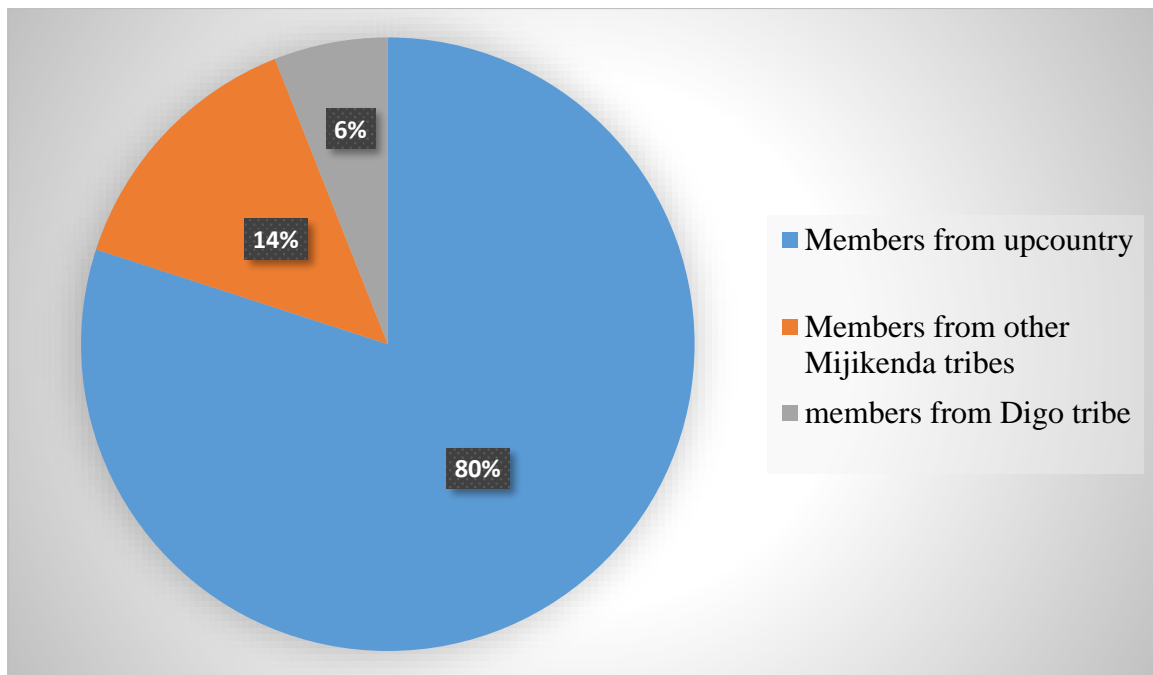
(Matthew 28:19-20) and their vision statement (<http://www.aickenya.org>) is “to proclaim Him, warning and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man that is mature in Christ” (Col: 1-28).

The church has five objectives, which are aimed at fulfilling their Mission and vision which are

- to fulfill the commission of the Saviour Jesus Christ as read in Matthew 28:19,20;"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations....,".
- to glorify God in everything.
- to instruct and to strengthen church members in the faith and holy living.
- to help Christians so that they may stand firm on the Scriptures.
- to show and demonstrate Christ's love and concern for people by engaging in selective community development projects based on biblical and evangelical principles and practices.

This church has 50 members of which the majority is the young adults who were mainly women. Men go to work while they send their wives and children to church. There were only three Digo people out of the 50 members, which forms 6% of the total membership. There were seven members from other Mijikenda tribes the Giriama and Duruma, forming 14% of the total membership. The rest of the 40 members were from other parts of Kenya and they formed 80% of the total membership. Eighty percent of the members had come to work in Kwale country government offices, resort hotels and other businesses in this county. Figure 2 below shows the AIC's members' distribution in terms of diverse ethnicity

**Figure 14: AIC Membership ethnic distribution**



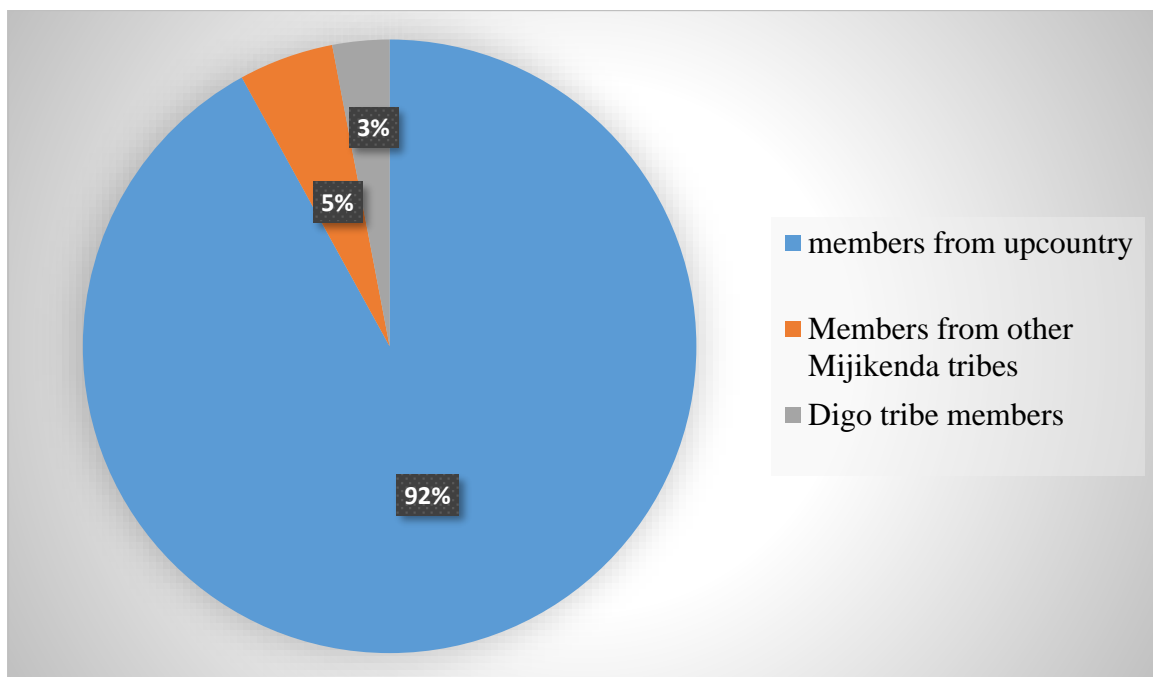
*Source: From research findings*

The AIC's evangelistic involvement with the Digo Muslims focuses on sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ through its health ministries, which includes the provision of spiritual and quality health care services. The church had various programmes that enhance community healthcare like the eye clinic checkups, which are normally conducted on a yearly basis. These programmes were facilitated through the AIC Health Ministries department from their head office in Nairobi, Kenya. The AIC Kenya through its branches provides spiritual and physical healthcare to marginalised communities in Kenya through various programmes that empower the local communities such as the Digo tribe Muslims. Despite the AIC using these health ministries programmes as an approach of reaching the Digo Muslims with the gospel, they have not managed to resonate with this community. Since their aim was to convert them from Islam to Christianity only a small percentage had responded to the gospel and joined the church as shown in the above figure.

#### 4.1.2 Baptist Church (B.C.)

This church was founded in 1993 in Kwale town, Kwale County. The church was situated in a poor, Digo Muslim neighbourhood. The founders stood on a vision that was demonstrated through word and deed ministry. Interestingly, this church had not experienced much growth since it was founded. The church had 60 members, but the weekly attendance on Sunday worship services was much less. In general, its members were middle-aged. The church had more women than men. The churches in this area were not growing by reaching out to the targeted people group, the Digo Muslims. Mostly, if not all, churches in Digoland grew by reaching out to other Christian denominations. This church had 55 members who were not indigenous and were mostly people from upcountry, making up 92% of the total membership while three members were from other Mijikenda tribes (5% of total membership), and two were Digo tribe members (3% of the total membership). Figure 3 below displays the church membership ethnic distribution.

**Figure 15: B.C. Membership ethnic distribution**



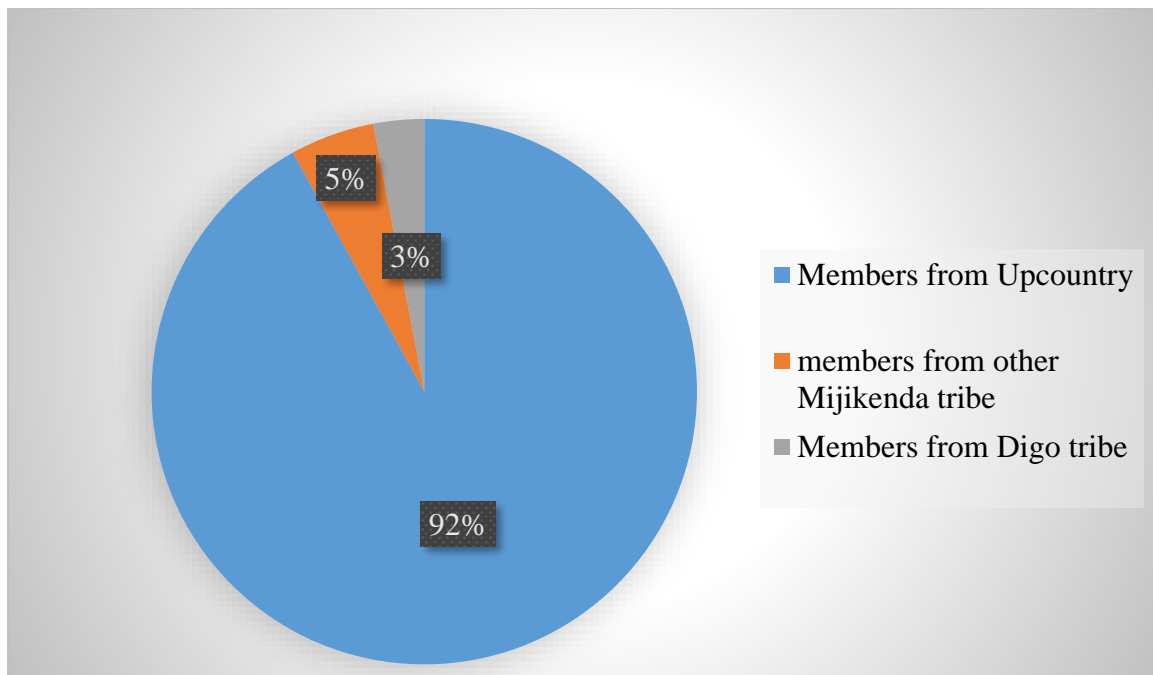
*Source: From research findings.*

This church's evangelistic involvement with the Digo Muslims focused on public crusades. These crusades which were conducted from time to time in this area had resulted in some people giving their lives to Christ. Muslims did not attend these crusades, but listened from a distance. Many people who attended the crusades were those from other Christians denominations, and these were the people who recommitted their lives to Jesus through rebaptism and they change their denomination. Figure 15 shows that people from the upcountry area comprise the highest percentage of membership. Some of the people came to this area were already Christians, while others had drifted away from Christ and upon attending the Crusade they had rededicated their lives to Christ and joined the church. Another method that this church used was door-to-door visitations. This is normally done after the evangelistic Crusade had been conducted in the area. This served as a follow-up ministry to the Crusade. These approaches had not been effective in reaching out to Digo Muslims. They may have listened to the message and accepted any assistance provided, but they remained unconverted, only a very small number responded as a consequence as they had a fear of getting isolated from their family and the Muslim community.

#### **4.1.3 Gospel Revival Church (GRC)**

Since its founding in 1990, in KwaleJeza A., this GRC church had continued to grow steadily in numbers. This church had started working with the Digo tribe Muslims from the time it was founded. It had 200 members of which 194 members were people from upcountry, which made up 92% of the total membership. Ten members were from other Mijikanda tribes (5% of the membership), while six members were from the Digo tribe which formed 3% of the total membership. This church had more young people than adults, and the majority were women. This church's neighbourhood mostly comprised of middle-aged people with diverse ethnicity, including people from different tribes of Kenya.

**Figure 16: GRC Membership ethnic distribution**



*Source: From the research findings.*

This church's evangelistic involvements with the Digo Muslims were through crusades, personal door-to-door evangelism, literacy classes for adults and young people who dropped out of school due to pregnancy or lack of funding. This church conducted two crusades each year and which were usually 'open-air evangelism.' In these crusades, the preacher preached Biblical sermons in an attempt to convert the Digo Muslims to Christianity. Nevertheless, in most cases the church ended up reaching out to people from other Christian denominations. Muslims did not attend these crusades but most churches in this area still used this approach to reach out to Muslims, even though it was clearly not effective. One of the participants from this church said, "it is very disappointing as a church when not even one Digo Muslim attends our well organised crusades which are targeted to them." During the door-to-door visitation ministry, the church visited people in their homes, made friendships with them and then started Bible study with them.

The aim of Bible study was to win souls for Christ and convert them from Islam to Christianity. The church had initiated adult literacy classes within its premises and they tried to teach these adults how to read and write. Since this literacy programme was conducted on the church premises, it had not attracted the Digo Muslims. Most of the Digo Muslims felt offended when they went to a church building since it was against their religious teaching. Not all these methods had yielded much fruit and very few Digo Muslims had joined the church with only six converts since 1990.

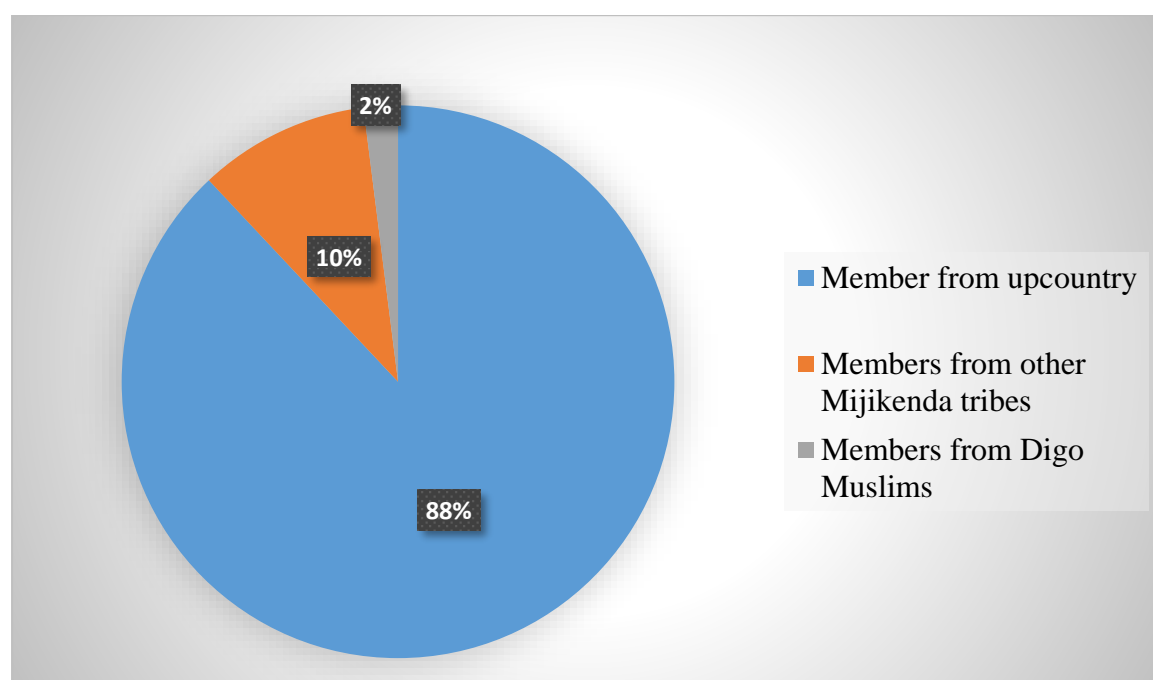
#### **4.1.4 Methodist Church (MC)**

This church, founded in the 1960s, along Kinango road, in Kwale town, Kwale County and was situated in a poor, Digo community. The founding Mission of this church was to preach the good news, set at liberty the afflicted and equipped believers and its vision is to witness for Christ in transforming lives. Its goal was to strengthen church systems and resources to bridge spiritual and social gaps for church growth within its neighbourhood and beyond. These three elements were linked to this church's four objectives which were to (1) empower believers into faith and freedom through God's Word, (2) promote social holiness through the Spirit of Methodism, (3) inspire and mentor excellence in church leadership and management, and (4) to enhance continued membership growth and Church sustainability.

This church also emphasised the inheritance of the apostolic faith and loyally accepted the fundamental principles of the historic creeds of the Protestant Reformation. They focused on the providence of God for Methodism to raise and spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith. They declared their untiring resolve to be true to its divinely appointed Mission to unreached people, such as the Digo Muslims and people of other faiths in the South Coast of Kenya and beyond. The MC in Kwale town was solidly built on the Word of God and it affirmed that the Word of God never returns to God void. This church had 210 members of which 185 of them were members from

upcountry (88% of the total membership), 20 of them were members from other Mijikenda tribes (10% of total membership), and five of them were members from Digo tribe Muslims (2% of the total membership). The church had middle-aged members of which more of them were women. According to the findings, this church membership had been stagnating for some time. Figure 5 below shows MC membership's ethnic distribution.

**Figure 17: MC Membership ethnic distribution**



*Source: From research findings*

The Methodist Church's evangelistic involvement with the Digo Muslims focused on witnessing by sharing the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. This church encouraged every member to witness for Jesus Christ. The church also supported a holistic theology of development, inclusive of full development of the body, mind and soul. This principle informed and guided the church's rural and urban development programme in its support for the church's mission. This church had been a caring church since its inception in Digoland, and had placed strong emphasis on education and healing ministries besides carrying out its core aim of providing spiritual nourishment to the people.



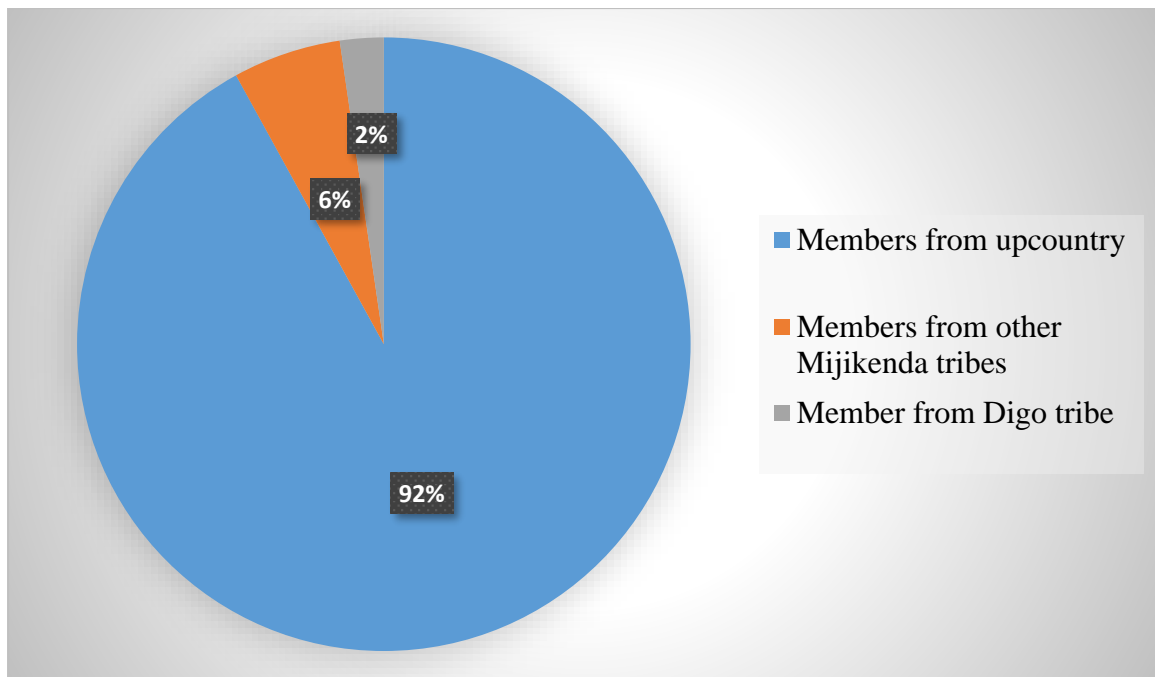
The church used its development agenda to propagate its Mission based on Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

This church initiated projects that sought to share the love of Christ in the South Coast of Kenya, which was occupied by a strong Muslim population. It had established schools that were managed and run on Christian values as a way of reaching out to the children in those Digo Muslim communities. However, as evidenced from the statistics above the church had only five members from these Digo Muslim neighbourhoods, which indicated that the church's approaches had not yet effectively met their ultimate goal.

#### **4.1.5 Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC)**

This church was founded in 1993 in Kwale Jeza A, Kwale County. God put a burden in the leaders' heart concerning the unreached Digo Muslims of Kwale County. A few individuals started the church and by the grace of God, it has grown and had been able to reach various unreached and unchurched people groups of the South Coast of Kenya. The church was founded on the following pillars: prayer, uninterrupted praise and worship, strict spiritual discipline, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship, and community service. This church had a membership of about 260, which is a remarkable accomplishment due to the nature of the South Coast being one of the hardest areas to reach in Kenya because of the radical nature of the Islamic residents who constitute 90% of the population. Despite these difficulties, this church experienced a steady increase in membership, mostly among the young families and the youth who came to this area in search of employment or to start up small scale businesses since Kwale County was a tourist area due its beautiful beach hotels in Diani. The membership of this church comprised of people from different tribes in Kenya. The church's composition of membership is 92% people from upcountry, 6% from other Mijikenda tribes and 2% Digo people who had converted from Islam to this Christian church. The pie chart below shows the composition of RGC membership.

**Figure 18: RGC Membership ethnic distribution**



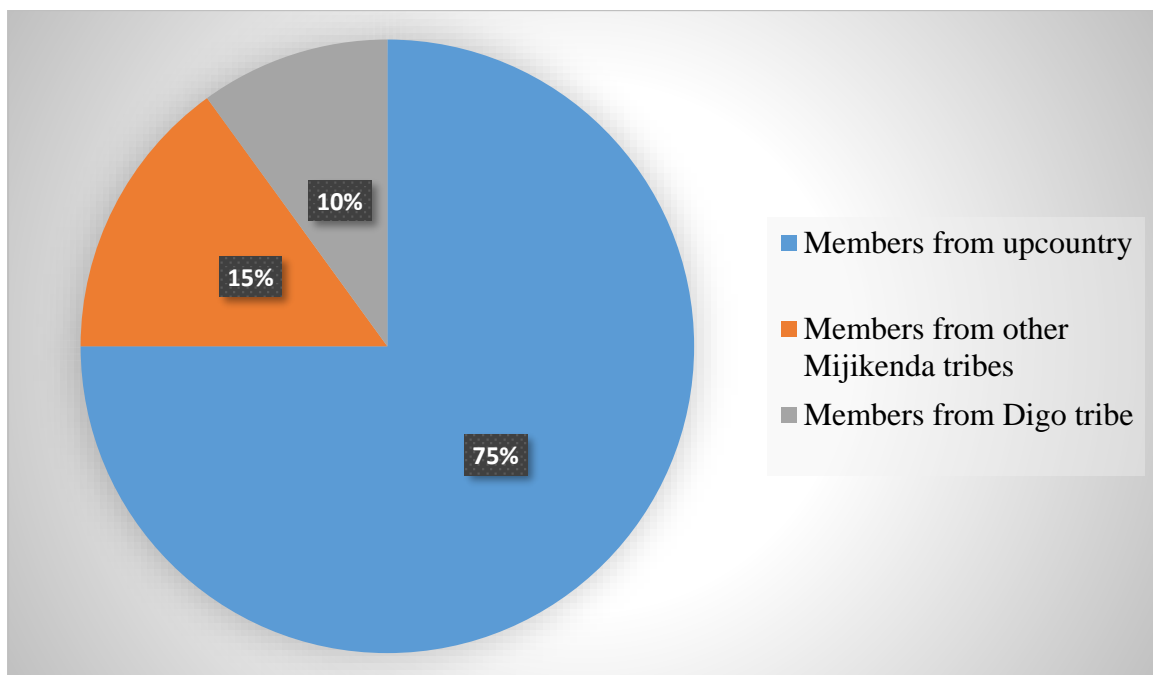
*Source: From research findings*

This church has adopted evangelism which is blended with social concern as a holistic approach for the total man; ministering to the mind, soul and Spirit in their evangelistic involvement with the Digo Muslims. RGC as an entity has initiated two Mission projects in recent years in the Kwale County, one high school called Redeemed Academy in Mzambweni constituency and one primary school in Ukunda. However, according to the findings these schools are comprised of only Christian students. The Digo Muslims do not send their children to Christian schools, besides, due to their abject poverty, the Digo Muslim parents cannot afford to take their children to these schools. The major evangelistic approach for the RGC is to conduct crusades twice a year. This approach mostly attracts other Christians from other denominations, but not Digo Muslims. The word Crusade by itself has bad connotations as was discussed in chapter three of this research.

#### 4.1.6 Salvation Army Church (SA).

Since its founding in 1998, this Kwale small-town church has been declining in its membership. During the study, it consisted of people in their 50s and younger. The church meets in Kwale primary school buildings. This church was surrounded by the poor Digo neighbourhood. However, because it was within the town vicinity, there had been an increase of ethnic diversity in the area. People had come to work in the area from all over Kenya though the Digo people were the majority. This church's purpose in this area was to testify to the goodness of their Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ and to win souls for Christ. The church had 20 members of which 15 were members from upcountry (75% of the total membership), three of the members were from other Mijikenda tribes (15% of the total membership), while two of the members were from Digo tribe (10% of the total membership). This congregation had more women than men and they were of a middle-aged mixed group. Figure 6 below shows the membership ethnic diversity of this church.

**Figure 19: SA Membership ethnic distribution**



*Source: From the research findings*

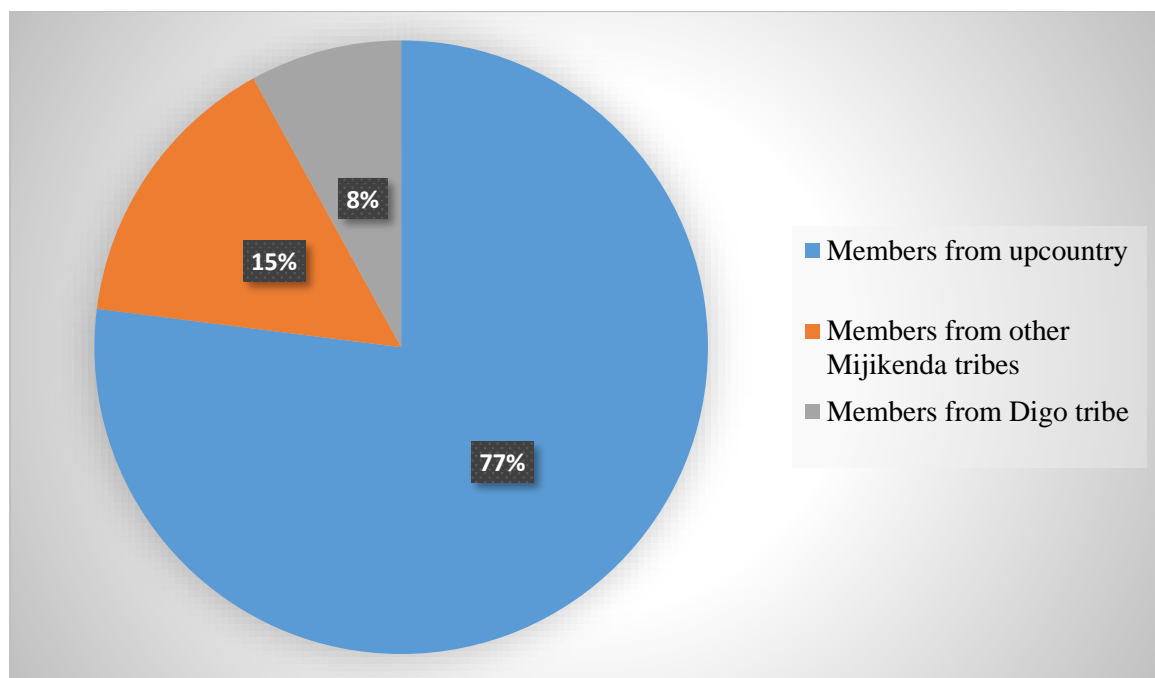
The SA's evangelistic involvement with the Digo tribe Muslims was through planned campaigns, Sunday worship, open-air meetings (crusades), indoor meetings, door-to-door visitation, community based programmes, and through Christian fellowship in the various churches throughout its neighbourhood. In spite of all these evangelistic approaches, there was a poor response from the Digo Muslims in this area. The church so far only had two single adult members.

#### **4.1.7 Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA)**

This church, founded in 1984 in Kwale Jaze B, was also situated in a poor, unreached Digo tribe Muslims neighbourhood. A few individuals who had come to work as government officials in this small town initiated it. Throughout its history, neighbourhood demographics of this church had significantly shifted. At the time of the study, the church was situated in a diverse ethnic community where many people came from upcountry and other coastal areas in search of employment. However, the indigenous Digo tribe still formed the majority. This church emphasised that Mission was supreme, for it was the very purpose for which it existed.

The SDA Church, like all other churches, had a unique Mission that it focused on. The success or failure was determined by the status of its Mission achievement. This church's mission in Kwale County was to evangelise the unreached people groups within its reach in accordance with Jesus Christ's Great Commission (Matthew, 28:18-20). During the study, this church had 130 members of which 100 members were from upcountry (77% of total membership), 20 members were from other Mijikenda tribes (15% of the total membership), and 10 members were from the Digo tribe. Muslims formed 8% of the total membership. Figure 20 below shows this church's ethnic distribution in percentage form.

**Figure 20: SDA Membership ethnic distribution**



*Source: From research findings.*

This church's evangelistic involvement with the Digo Muslims started in 1995. One of the SDA church leaders who was a pioneer in Muslim work in the South Coast of Kenya said,

“Muslim work in the South Coast of Kenya started with a debate with few church leaders who were motivated to reach out to the Digo people in this area; the Muslim work was a long journey and I visited Ukunda (in Kwale county) many times thereafter until we had huge campaign there which brought many and resulted in a group, a follow-up was made and today there are a number of groups from Likoni to Kwale to Matuga to Mzambweni, yes the work is growing.”

The church's evangelism involvement in this area was both personal and public. It's personal evangelism by individual members targeted individuals at a time. The personal evangelism which this church was using, Hubbard (1918:203), has defined it as, “the telling of the ‘good news’ or the promulgation of the gospel”. This approach therefore refers to evangelistic efforts exerted by an individual. In this way, an evangelist directs his activities to people on an individual basis. Personal evangelism is an inevitable responsibility of every SDA Church member as its one of the fulfilment of her/his baptismal vows. The Church Manual (2010:46) of the SDA Church, presents vow number 7 of the 13 vows, as follows; “Do you look

forward to the soon coming of Jesus and the blessed hope, when “this mortal shall ... put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54, KJV)? As you prepare to meet the Lord, will you witness to His loving salvation by using Your talents in personal soul-winning endeavour to help others to be ready for His glorious appearance?” For this church, personal evangelism is significant; for it directly relates to church growth by membership increase. Although not many church members are involved in this, but still they use the approach in reaching out to Digo Muslims in their neighbourhood.

This church also uses public evangelism in their involvement with the Digo Muslims and other people of other faiths in the region. The church targets a larger group of people, as it targets members of the public, in public places, seeking to confront them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the church’s preparation for public evangelism, its members are expected to support the programme with their resources, effort and influence as it engages in public evangelism. Supporting the church’s efforts is an expected responsibility that members should be committed to, when they took the baptismal vows. The Church Manual (2010:47) renders vow number nine of the 13 vows as follows: “Do you believe in church organisation? Is it Your purpose to worship God and to support the church through Your tithes and offerings and by Your personal effort and influence?” With all these evangelism involvements with the Digo Muslims, not much has been achieved in this church yet as from the membership statistics shown in the figure above, there are only 10 Digo Muslim background believers in this church.

#### **4.2 THE IMPACT OF CURRENT APPROACHES TO MISSION TO DIGO TRIBE**

The question the MBB participants were first asked was how they came to live in the South Coast of Kenya, and who they were? The interviewed MBB participants said that they were born in the South Coast of Kenya and that they were the Digo tribal people.

The participants were asked how they assessed the impact of the church's evangelism approaches in reaching out to Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. The participants from the SDA church said that church was putting more effort in spreading the Gospel of Jesus among the Digo Muslims in that area. In assessing the current approaches that churches were using, he said "some are working and some are not." For instance, this participant expressed that the dialogue approach the SDA church mostly used, turned out to be a debate and hence in most cases caused more harm than good. The participant cited and explained many instances where *Mihadalas* (dialogue) had been conducted and started off well, but ended up in chaos, causing severe enmity between Muslims and Christians in the area. The participant from the GRC said that churches had been destroyed by the Muslims in response to open-air meetings, which many churches had been using in reaching out to both Muslims and people of other faiths. She said that their church was burnt down due to the Crusade they were conducting, which was considered as hostile and abusive by the Muslim community. This made the Muslims respond in a destructive manner. However, all participants argued that all the Christian denominations should have strategies of reaching out to the Digo Muslims in the area.

They gave several strategies for winning Muslims to Jesus Christ, as follows. MBBs, church leaders and frontline evangelists clarified that outreach happened in many forms including deliberate personal visits. For instance, while the SA was reaching out to Muslims, one participant indicated that he had attempted to reach out to Digo Muslims in the area, but in vain, due to problems associated with methods that churches were using in the area which had caused a lot of tension between the two religions. It was further explained that some of the approaches such as dialogue had worked and some Muslims had accepted the Gospel of Jesus but were fearful because their Islam religion prohibited acceptance of any other religion as true except Islam. Some of the approaches used in reaching out to Muslims

included the creation of small groups who visited Muslims in their houses. They indicated that some of the people who were visited were women who had accepted the Word of God, thus Jesus as Saviour of their lives. At the same time, they were fearful of joining Christianity because of obvious penalties that would follow their conversion. Some of these were about the danger of losing their lives, property, family and many other things.

All the participants agreed in their assessment that there was a need to engage with Muslims in a meaningful acceptable approach and argued that it was their Christian mandate as a community of believers who were co-workers with Christ. The Lord's imperative command provided in Matthew 28:18-20 where Jesus told his disciples to go to the ends of the world, preach the gospel, and make disciples, was seen as the main focus of the Church. The participants had a concern for the condition of their churches, indicating that their members were not aware of the need to reach out to the Digo Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They said that there was a need to mobilise and prepare church members with proper approaches of reaching out to Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. All the participants stressed this.

The SDA Church was the only Christian denomination mobilising and preparing her affiliates to reach out to Digo Muslims in the area. According to the SDA participants, all of her members were trained on Adventist Muslim Relations (AMR). One participant stated that his family was Muslim and his attempts to witness to them had begun to bear some little fruit. Nevertheless, he was appreciative that his church had prepared him with good approaches on how to relate to his family after leaving them and joining a Christian church. The participant from RGC said that Muslims were religious and according to her, what the Muslims needed was the love of God from all Christians. She was glad that as a member of the RGC, she knew how to interrelate and make friends with Muslims. She knew that through love, she had faith that she would win them to Jesus. The SDA participants explained further that their



churches in cooperation with church denominations had organised several fora such as public debates known as *Mijadalas* and public dialogues also known as *Mihadharas* with Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya for the sake of engaging them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although, as earlier mentioned, this had caused a lot tension in some instances. However, these fora had been known to attract people from all occupations, including government officials and other prominent affiliates, Muslim leaders and Christians.

Some participants clarified that people of the various Christian denominations in the area were not free to do Mission because the approaches they were using had already created enmity. The B.C. participants mentioned the problem of the attitude of the Christians towards Muslims as one that lacked the humility of Christ in their approaches. There was much public debate and dialogue which resulted in actually attacking one another, causing Muslims and Christians not to be in good terms. The MC participants indicated that approaches used with Digo Muslims had made them want to retaliate against Christians who were within their reach. All the participants across the board proposed that there should be a better way of interacting with Muslims before introducing them to the Gospel of Jesus. They said this had to be done carefully and slowly, with the Christian motive of love being paramount as they engaged Muslims in Digoland.

Some participants lamented over the evident negative attitude of most of their pastors in their provocative preaching. They said that it was one of the causes for poor results in soul-winning among Muslims, hence this tended to portray the Church as being on the losing side in the South Coast of Kenya. They stressed that some of these pastors preached hatred against Muslims and they attacked Islam as a false religion as well as Muhammad as a false prophet.

However, some church leader participants who were pastors stressed that engaging the Muslims in open-air debates and crusades in evangelistic campaigns was effective. They

aimed at winning Muslims to the Christian faith through arguments. However, this kind of approach had proven not to bear fruit in the area of Digo people. Muslims already knew the strategies of the Christian churches and they usually had counteractive meetings to demean Christians' claims in their preaching. Some Muslims even joined the Christian church secretly, fearing the consequences that could follow if they were known. It was also clear from the participants that some of these converts were known to go back to the Islamic faith due to poor or lack of nurturing plans among the Christian churches. It was evident that if the churches were to continue to use this kind of approach, they needed to have effective plans for nurturing the Muslim converts. According to some participants, this had not been possible due to the many needs these converts had when they joined a church in the area. Nevertheless, it was argued by the participants that well-to-do members should be assigned to the needy converts. The church needed to take full responsibility, if they continued this kind of unfruitful extraction approach. It was also suggested that the church leaders should be in the forefront in making sure that these Muslims were assisted and were enjoying their new fellowship in Jesus Christ.

One participant, a church leader from the SA, strongly approved the use of crusades as a method of reaching to the Muslims, even after he had heard of all the problems associated with this approach. He said that the only way Muslims could be educated about Christianity was by conducting crusades within major towns in the South Coast of Kenya. However, one participant argued that open-air evangelistic campaigns had not done any good in the area since whenever held, there was an element of confrontation, leading to violence. It seemed that some Christians used their own efforts in reaching out to Muslims with the gospel. Some participants stated that there should be many prayers for God's guidance in this area. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was and is needed in planning and in effecting the best method for reaching out to Muslims. The participants affirmed that for success in this region

there was a need for Christians to live a lifestyle which the Bible approved. Love should be the key, not crusades. Crusades had to do more harm than good, as many participants had agreed.

Most participants from other churches indicated that it was difficult to assess their churches' evangelistic approaches since there was no Mission work that was specifically geared towards reaching Muslims. One participant from the AIC church said that they were not doing any Mission, although their neighbours were Muslims. Other participants from the SA indicated that they had not reached out to the Muslims in their community because they did not believe Muslims would listen to them, and they feared they would be asked questions that were too difficult to be answered about the Christian faith. The participant from the MC indicated that their members felt it was not important for Christians to reach out to Muslims for they considered the Muslims to be anti-Christian. They thought the development of strategies to reach them would be a waste of time. Nevertheless, most of the participants were of the view that Muslims, like any other humans who do not know the way of salvation, should be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of the participants, especially from the RGC and GRC, were of the opinion that living in harmony and in love was crucial in instituting friendships with Muslim neighbours before introducing them to Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer. They further said that this could be realised only if Christian members took the initiative to invite the Muslims into their homes and take hold of the opportunity to share the love of God. The SA pastor said that he would like to see many other Christian denominations in the area conduct and preach in joint crusades just to educate the Muslims, although they normally did not attend but listened from a distance.

The general assessment of the participants from most of the interviewed Christian denominations said that there was not much going on in their churches as far as Muslim evangelism was concerned. They indicated that the church has no strategies laid down for

reaching out to the Digo Muslims with the gospel, although they wanted to do Mission to the Digo Muslims. The churches in the area were comprised of people from upcountry who were not Digos, and they had no training on how to do Mission to the Muslims, as some participants expressed.

The participants went on to mention some of the reasons that prevented Christian denominations in Digoland from winning Muslims to Christianity. Most frontline evangelist participants in the area explained that churches had not made many efforts in reaching out to Muslims. They also said that the Christian denominations in the area sometimes confused Muslims because they had different doctrinal beliefs that arose from their denominational distinctives. These differences among Christians caused misunderstanding and discord among the Christian churches in the South Coast of Kenya, hence stalling the work of Mission to Muslims.

The participants also mentioned that religious differences between Muslims and Christians were a hindrance to any of the approaches used by the Christian churches to share the gospel with the Muslims. Theologically, for example, Christians saw Jesus as the Saviour of the world as opposed to the Muslims who viewed and acknowledged Him as a prophet like any other prophet mentioned in the Bible and in the Qur'an. Most Christians saw Muhammad as a prophet of Islam who deceived Muslims by saying that Jesus was not the Son of God and that Jesus did not die on the cross, nor had been buried and resurrected. The participant church leaders expressed their feelings that Islam and Christianity should be left alone with what they believed in, since each wanted to win the argument. One church leader participant stated that each of their members should not be involved with Muslim ministry in any way. This participant seemed not to be in line with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

Most participants who were well informed about Islamic religion from the interviewed seven selected Christian denominations stated that another barrier creating

difficulty for Christian women to reach out to the Muslim women, no matter how good their strategy was, was the dress code. This was a major hindrance in engaging with Muslim women in the area. They indicated that while Christians viewed Muslim women as hiding behind the covering for pretence, Muslims considered this as their modest manner of worship. The dressing of the Christian women was viewed as unattractive to the Muslim community in the area. The moral laws that govern life, worship of God and religion were revealed by these participants to be hindering most Christians from winning Muslims to Christ. One participant from the B.C. stated that another reason why the churches do not make any impact in winning Digo Muslims was because of enmity between Christians and Muslims.

One Christian church leader participant said that he hated Muslims because of their terrorist actions and violence, which had been going on in Kenya and in the world historically and even to the present day. This approach towards Muslims was also a factor that existed even among the Christian church members in the area and needed to be dealt with for the sake of engaging Muslims and winning them to Christianity. Some participants indicated the methods employed by the churches were found to be ineffective due to the church leaders' lack of information about the Muslims, lack of trained labourers and lack of sufficient sensitisation within the specific Protestant churches in the area. One participant from RGC testified that the Muslims they knew understood their doctrines and were better acquainted with the Bible than the Christians. In many instances, in debates, many Christians were ashamed when they were prompted with questions from their own book, the Bible. Another participant from the SDA church stated that most church members and leaders had not read the Qur'an nor have any understanding of the Quran and its teachings. They further said that Christians were engaging in a Mission which they did not understand and those who were trying to engage Muslims should endeavour to understand Islam as a religion. The churches

in Digoland needed to equip their members with a suitable understanding and better plans for engaging the Muslims.

Most of the interviewed participants argued that for churches to be effective in Muslim evangelism in the Digoland they should come up with plans designed at engaging Muslims with the Gospel in a constructive manner, plans had to include aid to the people, cultural understanding, resolution of religious matters, reading of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature. One of the participants from the SDA church appreciated the church's efforts of sending evangelists in the area to reach out to the Muslims, but he, as well, indicated that the church should come up with ministries for assisting the poor people at whom this gospel of the kingdom was aimed. The church also should build a neutral centre for engaging with the Muslims. He stressed further that Christians should be cautious not to denounce Muslims in any manner in their public preaching but instead endeavour to engage the Muslims with love, respect, and compassion. Some participants from B.C. and RGC mentioned that Muslims operated naturally together on cross-cultural relationships as opposed to Christians, who normally saw each other as different, an ideology based on their doctrinal denominational differences. Frontline evangelist participants suggested that on cross-cultural issues, Christians had to be guided by the Bible to be caring, loving, calm, respectful and patient as these qualities defined Jesus' ministry. He urged His followers to emulate them. These qualities of Jesus should be emulated by the churches as they attempted to relate to Digo Muslims.

The problem of preachers condemning and confronting Muslims on issues of cultural practices and beliefs had to be checked and dealt with for the sake of sharing the Gospel of Jesus. The participants indicated further that there was a need for Christians to examine themselves regarding their daily lives. For instance, Christians should not allow themselves to be influenced by Western culture, which at times undermines the African traditional cultural

practices and beliefs. One participant praised the Digo Muslims for remaining true to their culture and beliefs despite ending up not praising God. Some participants said that many Christian churches in the area had been established by Western missionaries, hence their members had been enslaved by Western culture in the way they dressed and sang. This, they said, did not appeal to the Muslims in any way. Actually, many participants blamed the church for not appealing to the Muslims and they testified that while the Muslims were careful not to change from their Islam to Christianity, Christians were to blame for living lives that did not reflect what was taught in the Bible.

Additionally, from the participants, it was clear that there was disunity among the churches in the area, especially among evangelical church members. Their ideologies were blamed for the antagonistic methods displayed among themselves and towards Muslims, which were not reflecting on the image of Jesus who they were trying to proclaim in the Muslim community.

One participant stated that people believed that Muslims aimed at killing Christians. They affirmed that according to what they had heard and had been told, Muslims believed if they killed Christians, they would go straight to heaven. They talked about the Jihad and they only regarded Muslims as terrorists. Muslims were not seen as brothers and sisters born in the South Coast of Kenya, but were seen as *Al Shabaab* which is the name of a group of terrorists in Somalia, that was out to terrorise the Christian community. This kind of thinking and these approaches made it hard to engage Muslims in this region and beyond.

During the interview, some of the participants pointed out that Muslims were tactical in the manner in which they conducted their evangelism in the area. They mentioned their approaches as not only intimidating, but also confusing to many of the church members who attended their debates or dialogues. They understood the Bible very well and used it to win Christians to Islam. It was worrying that the majority of church members did not read the

Bible and at times, were caught unaware when Muslims asked questions. This had been seen to happen with pastors as well according to the participants. Some participants raised a concern that Muslims had built mosques on the roadside with big loudspeakers installed on top, which were used to call their people to prayer.

One pastor from the SA lamented that Muslims had penetrated the whole Digoland and they have even built mosques in the remote areas. He further indicated that most of the churches were struggling with a place of worship, and that, of the Digo Muslims who had joined Christianity; most of them have returned to Islam due to factions within Christianity. Some participants who interacted with MBB that had gone back to Islam said the main reason for their return to Islam was not because they did not believe in Jesus, but because their needs were not met in the churches to which they belonged. In addition, there was a lot of gossip in Christian churches and some church members were not living what they read preached from the Bible, they did not reflect Christ in their lives. They also did not live their faith out in a Christ like way.

One participant spoke about the Muslim strategy of targeting those who had left Islam to draw them back to Islam by offering them jobs and moving them from the South Coast of Kenya to Mombasa town, by helping their children in schools and doing much more for them. To some extent, this strategy had not worked and some had left Christianity and joined Islam again. One of the SDA participants said that he initiated an approach of helping Digo Muslims in the area with their felt needs; but this had not worked due to the various challenges. Most of the Digo people lived in poverty hence fulfilling all their needs was not possible. Although it was not possible, he commended the church for trying, but mentioned that more needed to be done. He further indicated that this could be done by church leaders came to the area to see how these people lived. He mentioned how Jesus met the peoples'



physical needs before even preaching the message of the kingdom and how this was to be emulated by the church.

Moreover, some participants mentioned that Christians were putting more effort in praying in their churches for the Muslims to accept Jesus but without practical plans being put into action. It was a great concern from the frontline evangelist participants that, whereas the Muslims were working hard in planning their methods to evangelise the Christians in the South Coast of Kenya, the churches were busily involved in reaching out to Christians of other denominations instead of unbelievers. Most Christians, who formed the minority in the area, were ignorant about Islam; hence there was a need to train them, as the participants emphasised. It was noted as well that even the pastor did not know much about Islam, pastors had to be trained as well for them to support Mission work. The participants blamed themselves that the Christians did not even understand nor embrace African culture, which the Muslims were found to embrace within their Islamic religion. The Christians copied the West in everything they did in their church. Even though they had no knowledge of the origin of what they were practising, they imitated it so long as it was brought and taught by a Western missionary. One of the participants urged that the church should make the effort of learning the African culture by every possible means, even if they wanted to make an impact within the African Muslim people. They said that the church had to avoid being judgemental of the Muslims about how they dressed, for God does not look on the outside but on the heart (I Samuel 16:7).

The participants were of the opinion that when the Muslims were sending their children to Christian schools, they had to be allowed to dress in their Islamic attire and by so, doing create an opportunity to present the gospel of salvation to these children. They also expressed that religious attire should not be a reason for the Muslim children to be rejected from joining the Christian schools and that they should be offered the opportunity to come

the way they are, so to learn the love of the true God. One participant expressed concern about the few Christian schools in the area, although the few, which were there had been doing very good work and the Muslims appreciated them a lot. Henceforth, all the churches had to take the opportunity to build more schools as an approach of reaching out to Muslim children and their parents.

Some participants were of the opinion that some of their church leaders had not seen an urgent need to engage Muslims. They said that the leaders did not have a clear vision on ministry to the Digo Muslims. It was evident that they should come up with a clear approach on how to do it, which was not the case at hand. The churches as well needed to have definite guidelines on how to move forward with the gospel commission in this area. Some participants emphasised that people who had received a call and had volunteered to serve as missionaries in engaging Muslims in Digoland should receive all the necessary assistance to enable their Mission work.

Some participants were of the opinion that churches should encourage Christians to build bridges and make friendships with Muslims by engaging in business with the Muslims. They expressed that this would enable them to gain the confidence of the Muslims and share the Gospel easily with them. As Christians engaged in business, they should embrace the duty to help the poor Muslims in this poor community. They added that Christians had to be peacemakers with a good understanding and not provoke the Muslims concerning their religious practices, but rather join hands in working collaboratively. The participants emphasised the necessity of Christians to concentrate more on the significance of Mission and the knowledge that at all levels of engagement with Muslims, God was fully involved. It was imperative that Christians remembered that they were the minority where they lived and should therefore learn to mingle with Muslims and be a light to them at all costs.

The participants were also of the opinion that the approaches the churches were using in the area had to be motivated by love. In other words, the church had to be in the forefront to bridge the gap between Islam and Christianity by showing deep concern and the love of Christ for the community around them. They said that for this to happen, it was necessary for Christians to have a solid friendship among Islam adherents to demonstrate their integrity with the Muslim community around them. From this time, this would help the Muslims to see Christianity as a true religion, even though some doubted this. One participant stated that Christians had to stand by their instructions on issues of faith and religion. It was noted that the Christian youth mostly imitated a weird lifestyle and practices of the Western world, particularly on issues of dress and conduct. Henceforth, the church needed to evaluate itself on this and other issues to be effective in carrying out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. No constructive and valuable dialogue could be done in this Muslim community unless the Christians stopped copying most of the Western practices. That some participants had expressed. The participants indicated that while the majority of the Christians identified with foreign cultures which were far from the Islamic religion, they had to be careful as they approached the issue of Muslim culture and tradition. In other words, Muslims had to be approached prayerfully and with great prudence under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The participants mentioned that Christians were afraid that Muslims were terrorists, which made them keep the distance between them. Muslims were also viewed as people full of anger and ready to kill in the name of religion as many Christians looked at them as a threat to peace in the area. The participants said that it was hard to trust Muslims. One church leader reminded them about the promise by Jesus from Matthew 28:18-20, when He promised to always be with them. Therefore, there was a definite need for the Christians to continue sharing the good news in the area about Jesus and without fear. They had to always

remember that the One who was in them was greater than the one who was in the world (I John 4:4), as emphasised by most of the participants.

The participants of the AIC stated that there was a challenge of priority and that their church was spending much time and efforts on events unrelated to soul-winning. Reaching out to the Muslims seemed to be a waste of time to many, even their church leader. These AIC participants acknowledged that reaching Muslims and unbelievers was not a priority of the pastor and church officials. They suggested that Muslim evangelism should be given priority on church programmes and activities. One of the participants indicated that the church should stop focusing on Christians from other denominations but rather focus on unreached people groups, in this case, the Digo Muslims. The participants of SDA church again indicated that Christians should not hate the Muslims, but instead they should love them and mingle with them. Some participants said that care for the Muslim converts was not seen among the Christian churches and that follow-up and nurture should be stressed more. It was observed that some churches which were doing Mission to the Muslims were only concerned with numbers of converts and written reports, nothing went beyond that. The participants said this should stop to do follow-up with true love and caring ministries. One said “if you care, you are likely to keep them, but if no care, you lose them” which is a true statement even within Christianity.

The participants argued that there was a challenge for the church members perceiving that it was the work of missionaries from Western countries to do Mission to Muslims in Digoland, citing examples of some of the MBB won to Jesus by foreign missionaries in the area. The participants expressed that church members need to be educated on Mission work among Muslims. Awareness and training on how to reach out to the Muslims with the gospel in Digoland should be done immediately. Christians from the entire spectrum should learn to embrace each other for the common goal of reaching out to the Muslims. The Digo Christians

should work together with the people from up country without any divisions among them. In others words, as Christians, tribalism should not be tolerated among Christian denominations for the sake of Christ and doing Mission to Muslims. The church should improve in its budget for Mission work to the Muslims. The participants said Mission work among Muslims would be enhanced, but there were many financial difficulties for those assigned to do this ministry. One SDA participant expressed concern about the way Christians conducted their open-air public meetings in the area, saying their advertisements created a lot of tension. The terms they were using, such as the word “crusades,” always appeared to Muslims as an attack. There was a feeling that Christians needed to learn the terms, which are offensive to the Muslim community and their religion and avoid them as they work among Muslims.

The participants observed that church leaders should be in the forefront of planning Mission work among the Digo Muslims. They have the authority to give guidelines and strategies based on the Bible. They need to have the vision to accomplish the gospel commission. It was noted that some church leaders loved their position of leadership and yet they were not leading the church in the right directions as far as evangelisms was concerned. Change needed to be experienced among the church leaders in the South Coast of Kenya for there to be any true impact in loving and reaching the Muslims in the area. One participant affirmed that it is time to change from the old approaches of evangelism and embrace the approach of contextualisation, and to educate church members in Digoland for this change. The believers should be ready to be taught concepts of Islam religion, for example, in the issues of Islamic prayer, Qur’anic reading, and Muslim beliefs which would enable them to engage Muslims on common ground first, as they attempt to share the gospel.

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

This section covers the insertion (identification) analysis within the Digo tribe folk Islam context, Social analysis, theological reflection, and research implication for Mission response of the findings gathered from the participants.

#### **4.3.1 Insertion (identification) analysis within the Digo tribe folk Islam context**

The MBB participants were asked on what their established faith practices were before they became Christians. They responded to this question in terms of: Family and social issues, healing issues, faith issues, and worldview issues. The participants described many of their established faith related issues before they became Christians.

##### ***4.3.1.1 The Digo Muslims' family and social issues***

The participants said that as Digo Muslims, they are obligated to observe some religious values and beliefs imperative for all Muslims. The participants went on to explain that their culture as the Digo people is centred in their *Kaya* (homestead). The word *Kaya* among contemporary Digo families is used to point to the homestead as well as to the extended family living in the home. The word may also refer to bushy shrines, which were the original *kayas* (homesteads). The participants said that before the population increase of Digo, they used to live in fortified *Kayas* in thick forests or on the mountains.

The participants indicated that before they joined Christianity, they practised the following activities as part of their Digo Islamic faith. Traditional homestead (*Kaya*), Digo divination and ritual dance, which included divination and healing. Digo cultural therapy, which included ritual dance and musical instruments that were used in ritual dances. Witchcraft, which included Digo witchcraft, Jinn witchcraft, magic, life force witchcraft, and *Kijumba Cha Mlungu* (The House of God).

Participants described the traditional *Kaya* as the fortified homesteads that served as homes of refuge during the days the Digo people were a smaller population and had to protect themselves from the Arabs, Oromo, Portuguese, and Maasai invaders. This traditional *kaya* had two entries, one on the Western side and the other on the eastern side. The eastern entry was the main entryway to the *kaya*. There was a wooden door on either side of the *kaya* entrance. When the people were entering, or leaving the *Kaya* as a ritual, they were to drop a stick about 20 metres from the entrance and were not allowed to look back. Every married male was to build his own hut inside the *kaya*. The huts were built with wooden poles and thatched with grass. This hut had only one door facing the centre of the *kaya*. A family (*fingo*) shrine was usually placed somewhere in the centre space of the *kaya*. This shrine was made of a “holy” pot which was filled with healing herbs and dry pounded roots of trees, believed to bring good fortune and also were used by traditional healers for healing.

The *Kaya* had its own leaders who were normally a council of two to four male elders called *wahasamuji* (Council of elders), and they had helpers who were known as *wananjira* (messengers). The chosen leaders were the only individuals who were allowed to sacrifice at the *kaya fingo* (shrine). In the same *Kaya*, there were supposedly spirits of ancestors who had died (departed) which were believed to be residing inside there as part of the family. The presence of these spirits was a fortification for the *kaya*, and they were usually consulted for any main family affair, especially when there was illness in the family, where they were first asked to counsel the living on what they were demanding or to define what was going wrong. The spiritualists were then able to communicate with them through rituals of dance and worship. *Kayamba* (drum beating) was the most commonly executed dance in order to hear from the spirits. The participants further said that, currently, the semi-permanent houses seen in Digo communities, without the original protection, have replaced

the traditional *Kaya* (Sesi 2003:44). Digo traditional beliefs and practices are practised alongside Islamic beliefs even to this day.

The participants stated that among Digo people, there are two distinct types of songs and dances. Some of the songs and dances are for ritual divination while others are for festivity. Ritual songs are often used for divination, through which prayers for healing are presented. In these kinds of dances, the dancers normally wear ornamental and elaborate body covers, mostly made of hides and ostrich feathers, in order to lure the favour of the spirits and *Mlungu* (God) on behalf of their customers. Drumming and wind instruments normally accompany them. Dances (*ngomain* Digo language) can happen at different times, but commonly during harvest time, when less farming is usually going on. Dances also happen during burial services, during the forty days of keeping night watch (*matanga*) after a burial, and during marriages. The traditional minister is likely to lead the prayers during these cultural services, a role nowadays also filled by the Muslim imam, sheikh or teacher of the Qur'an. During a marriage, dancing is for amusement and entertainment. During *matanga* (burial), dancing is for reassuring the grieving family and begging the ancestral spirits to receive the dead. In songs and dances for divination and healing, the participants said that the healing ritual for one who is bewitched is called *kupigambao* (strike the wood). During this healing service, the *kayamba* is played in harmony with other drums and musical instruments. In this divination and healing, the *mganga* (diviner), is dressed in a four-sided hide ornamented with colourful beads, and ostrich feathers on his back, affixed with sisal string around his waist. The diviner also wears the *kiruu*, a headgear of baboon skin with cowrie shells, bead decorations, and ostrich feathers. The bead decorations and cowrie shells exemplify different spirits supposedly attached to the decor.



#### **4.3.1.2 The Digo Muslims healing issues**

On the issue of healing, the participants emphasised strongly the Digo cultural therapy; where they explained that the Digo people are rich in traditional therapies and herbal medicines. These practices were established long before the introduction of Western culture. According to the researcher, many African people groups already had some very effective cultural techniques for fighting diseases such as chronic diarrhea, liver disorders, amoebic dysentery, constipation, cough, eczema, ulcers, hypertension, diabetes, malaria, mental health, and healing of wounds and burn (Mhame, Busia, Kasilo, and Mhame 2010), even if the Western culture tends to depict these techniques as poorer, unsuitable, and even primitive. Several are still in use today. African cultural therapy stresses holistic treatment, ministering to the body, the mind, and the Spirit of the person. The Digo cultural therapies were varied and dealt with a variety of health problems, thus, both physical and spiritual.

To Digo Muslims, sickness is not only a physical issue but a religious one where there are supernatural causes in most cases which calls for both bodily treatment and mystical therapy. From the worldview of the Digo people, this world we live in is not just a material world but also a place of diverse evil and good spirits, a place where sorcerers and witches are capable of causing diseases, sickness, social disharmony, economic calamity, and death. These spiritual authorities were viewed as revengeful and jealous, thus triggering fear among the living. However, the participants affirmed further that there are various kinds of traditional healers among the Digo, who specialise in fighting these threatening issues both physically and spiritually. There are healers who were capable of treating many diseases, even though each healer was normally known for his or her specialty.

The participants also said that they practised ritual dance; playing the drums of *Kayamba* as part of healing at home when the head of the family asks for it, normally the Father. When the *Kayamba* is played, it is usually for the purpose of expelling *pephombaya*

(evil spirits) or appeasing *pephomzuri* (good spirits). Before the ritual dance is done, the individual who has the Spirit is asked to sit on a three-legged stool in the centre of the circle of those playing the Kayamba. The Kayamba is played until the evil Spirit is expelled and the good Spirit appeased. According to Digo belief, there are good and bad spirits. The good spirits are custodians for good health, for divination, and for protection. Bad spirits bring sickness, diseases, poverty, poor performance, infertility, miscarriages, and unemployment. The diviner make promises like the giving of a sacrifice of a goat or chicken in order to appease the spirits. The participants elaborated that the spirits can possess individuals in different ways. Some individuals may inherit the spirits from their parents, grandparents or from the family lineage, when they die. Usually inheritable spirits are good ones, serving as family protectors for generations.

In connection with this ritual dancing, they used musical instruments like the *Marimba* (a box xylophone) which was used especially in the dance (*Kiringongo*, its name in Digo language). *Kayambais* made from a clatter of dry stems of elephant grass and filled with seeds were also used in dances where there was spirit placation. The Kivoti (a bamboo flute), was used as well during the *Kayamba* dance; as was the *Ndunguri* (short vase-shaped drum) in ritual dances (*Marimba* dance). The *Gunda* (Waterbuck horn) was blown during dances and also used to warn people of any forthcoming danger in times of conflict. Participants stated that these practices existed even before they became part of their Islam culture and tradition, where they were still practised as part of their Muslim religious beliefs.

#### ***4.3.1.3 The Digo Muslims' faith issues***

On the issue faith, it became evident from the participants that the Digo people also believed in the reality of evil powers such as magic, sorcery/witchcraft, curse, evil eye, and the presence of the Jinn. Due to this kind of conviction, the Digo people lived under the bondage of fear. They believe that there were invisible powers and mystical forces were in

control of the world. In some cases, their traditional diviners and healers were believed to have the power and skills to tap into and control these unseen forces. Some of them were believed to have greater knowledge on how to control and tap into the spiritual powers than others. This was clearly seen in John Mbiti's (1975:166) statement where he says, "some have greater knowledge and skills than others, some possess the ability without knowing it and find later that through word or ritual they could release these forces for particular use." For the Digo people, their misfortunes were associated with some kind of mystical cause. Illness, for instance, was ascribed to witchcraft, evil magic, sorcery, or the evil eye. The Digo traditional practitioners were known for two distinctly different types of magic. The sorcerers and witches used magic for evil and mischief causing anguish and diseases, whereas the herbal medicine practitioners among the Digo used similar magic powers to treat illness supposedly caused by evil mystical activities.

The participants emphasised that in Digo belief, there was a difference between witchcraft and evil mystical activities; however, in the practical life of a Digo, they were used interchangeably. Although most of them practised these two, all Digo people believed that a witch was an evil person who purposes to do evil to neighbours or to thwart possible competition in any area of life. The key aim of a witch was to destroy other people. Witches were frequently full of jealousy of others' accomplishments and they sought to destroy an individual's fruitful career or property or even take his life. Those who practised magic were normally perceived in a different way because they seemingly made money through crafty and deceitful means. Evil magic could similarly be used as sorcery to harm other people. Sorcery in Digo community was known to cause physical injuries. Mbiti (1975:167) also confirms this by saying:

Sorcery generally takes on the form of spells, poisoning, or other physical injury done secretly by someone to someone else or his/her crops and animals. Witches, evil magicians and sorcerers are the most hated (and often feared) persons in their

communities. People fear to associate with them, to eat at their homes, or even to quarrel with them in case they may bewitch them.

It was informative from these MBB participants that sorcerers were feared as cunning murderers who killed for nothing but amusement. At times, they wanted to experiment with the power of their poison whenever they saw a stranger in their village. As Digo people, “we always take precautions every time we visit somebody we do not know very well” said one of the participants. They also revealed that when a baby was born, he/she must be protected from the evil intents and assaults of a sorcerer with special rituals and charms (*hiriziin* Swahili language). The charm was usually tied around the baby’s wrists, neck, and waist. Even though the Digo people believed in strong community ties and sharing of food, children were prohibited from receiving anything from anyone identified as a sorcerer or witch in their community.

The participants indicated that the Digo people were also fearful of the evil eye.

Musk (1989:26) affirms this by saying that:

Ordinary Muslims recognise the power of the evil eye. Its force can devastate their lives-so much so that a humorous proverb from Palestine asserts that two-thirds of humanity dies from the attacking influence of the evil eye upon them. The remaining third dies because it is careless in protecting itself against the evil eye! The evil eye touches all. The fundamental concept of the evil eye is that precious persons or things are constantly vulnerable to hurt or destruction caused by other people’s envy. Such envy or jealousy is projected through the eye.

In a Digo Muslim’s mind, envy was a force that may cause physical injury to what is envied. For instance, if one envies a child who is not protected by charms, illness can follow and may end up causing death if the evil eye is not thwarted in time. In describing this in more detail, the participant explained that “The eye of envy” was not a specific kind of eye, but it was a kind of jealous look, wanting possessions owned by another person. The power of this damaging jealousy was the strong feeling that the owner of the properties did not have the right to have them. Musk (1989:266) explains this:

The evil eye concept brings direction and sanction to a community that operates within the bounds of the 'limited good'. It helps maintain the tension between potential for growth at others' expense, and accepting a self-limiting norm. How does the individual household relate to the larger society? What happens if one household is tempted to claim more of the defined, limited good at others' expense? The evil eye concept provides a strong corrective. If a family goes for too much, someone's eye of envy will touch it somewhere and the imbalance of that family within the community will be rectified.

According to the researcher, the participants said that these people with "evil eye" (thus envious persons) were left alone, since the community had no solution to their problem. It came out clearly that the evil eye is so widespread that owners are allowed to live within the community without being considered evil people. People say that after all, if there is somebody to be blamed for their problems of the evil eye it would be God for allowing these people to be born with such evil power in their eyes. It is mostly observed within Digo community that some people with the eye of envy are witches at the same time. They not only discharge evil power through their jealousy, but they also bewitch the individuals whom they envy. Hartnell witnessed "the principal motive for witchcraft is *wivu*, 'jealousy,' of another person's success" (1996:75). Persons who are jealous of others' success can bewitch them so that they cannot excel. Witchcraft is so prevalent in Digoland; it is known to be the evil power used by traditional healers (*Waganga* in Swahili) or witches (*wachawi* in Swahili) to harm other people.

The reasons for witchcraft are several and diverse. They say that the main reason is envy (*wivu* in Swahili) against a close comrade or family member who seems to be doing better than others. The other reason is to eradicate an enemy from the community. In Digoland, the cause for enmity, like many parts of Kenya, is the shortage of land, and so neighbours are always in conflict for more land from the other. They normally do this by secretly moving the boundaries. When the owner discovers this, bewitching is the only solution to the problem. According to the researcher, nowadays witchcraft is also used to eradicate political opponents. Another reason for practising witchcraft or bewitching

someone was due to rivalry among the traditional healers. It was confirmed that the practice was so bad that at times the witches would try to prove witchcraft was more powerful by bewitching each other.

The participants stressed that the traditional healers (in Swahili, *waganga*) among the Digo used the Qur'an to diagnose and to treat illness along the Swahili Coast. This view is supported by Middleton (1992:179-180) who says:

Whereas the *mwalimu* [teacher] acquires power directly from the possession of Islamic knowledge, the power of the *mganga* has its source essentially in that given to him or her by spirits. *Waganga* are both male and female, whereas *walimu* are male only. Most *waganga* claim that their power comes directly from their use of Koranic texts and prayers, but it is generally agreed that they lack the knowledge that makes a *mwalimu*. It is accepted that most *waganga* come from the "African" rather than the "Arab" tradition within Swahili culture and so have deeper popular and "indigenous" roots.

While participants said that Islam did not support the practice of traditional mystical powers by its believers, they all disclosed that it was difficult to find a Digo Muslim or non-Muslim who did not believe in those powers. Certainly, the Sheikhs, and the Imams were forced to learn the traditional artisanship of power control to be able to survive among the Digo community. It was revealed that the Islamic law teacher, who was not well bound by traditional charms and spiritual powers, was at the risk of being bewitched and removed through witchcraft from the Digo community. In support of this point, Lewis (1966:60-61) states:

Muslim theology is equally tolerant in its attitude towards divination, magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. It condemns the illegitimate use of the last two; but it does not question their efficacy. And these related mystical activities, known by a variety of names in Arabic but most generally as *sihr*, have come to occupy a prominent and secure place in the popular heritage of Islam.

The participants also said that according to formal Islam, the presence of a host of intelligent spiritual creatures called Jinn was acceptable. They indicated that God created the Jinn. These Jinn, like humanity, could even be saved according to Islamic belief. Jinn, as the created beings were known, could be found in the common belief of pre-Islamic Arabia as

well. MacDonald (1965:547) confirms this claim by saying that the Jinn existed as “the nymphs and satyrs of the desert, and represented the side of the life of nature still unsubdued and hostile to man. But in the time of Muhammad, Jinn were already passing over into vague impersonal gods.” The Qur’an also shows that the Arabs of Mecca believed that there was a kinship (*nasah*) between Jinn and Allah (Surah 37:158). The Muslims believed that the Jinn could partake in the affairs of human beings as representatives of magical powers and witchcraft. The MBB participants said that among the Digo, traditional healers and priests acknowledged Jinn and used them to execute mystical tricks to diagnose and treat diseases; guard homes, prosperity, family, livestock, and properties; as well to destroy other people or harm them. According to the researcher, this kind of power was known to be similarly executed and related to what the Digo people traditionally used when they wanted to appeal to their ancestral spirits and nature spirits, before they were Islam. As a result, Islam, in this instance, approves a traditional belief comparable to the Qur’anic teaching.

Moreover, traditional witchdoctors, witches and traditional ministers were known for obtaining more power from Jinn to perform certain rites. For example, the rites to buy stronger spirits, particularly of the Jinn kind, from *waganga* (witchdoctors) were perceived to be the strongest among others. Most of these Jinn were found in the homesteads of renowned healers and ministers. There was also another rite of eating the flesh of the most deadly witches, traditional healers, and renowned ministers. This was known to happen on the funeral day for such an individual where the body could be removed and then a banana tree stump buried in the place of the corpse, or at times the body could be exhumed at night after the burial. Actually, the participants indicated that this was a part of the traditional method of obtaining more authority to control the spiritual powers.

#### 4.3.1.4 The Digo Muslims' worldviews issues

The Digo Muslims' worldview, when speaking on magic and witchcraft, participants said that in order to resist witchcraft, the Digo people had to make blood sacrifices at selected shrines. The diviners oversee the offerings and execute rituals to calm down the evil spirits or to drive them away. This was done whenever a Digo person was sick due to witchcraft. This person first went to consult with the diviner (*mganga*) to establish the problem. The *mganga* (diviner) would use various ways to identify the problem, using certain traditional instruments of divination or mostly by reading certain Qur'anic verses, like Surah 113. Subsequent to the diviner's establishment of the problem, the patient was advised on the suitable sacrifice to be offered and then given herbal medicines. Afterwards, the animals were offered as sacrifice to meet numerous needs in the community.

Normally a cow (Ng'ombe) was offered as a sacrifice in community ceremonies and in chosen shrines. In other words, this Ng'ombe was mostly offered in the *kaya* (homestead) where strong regional spirits were believed to be dwelling. A goat (*Mbuzi* in Swahili) is a blood offering that can be offered as well in areas of strong territorial spirits for individual or family needs. The sheep (Kondoo in Swahili) was offered in the same way as the goat and meant the same concept. The chicken (*kuku*) was also a blood offering for meeting individual or family needs in most cases. The Digo people also had what was known as the *mbegu* (grain) offering that was used in all kinds of rituals of prayer for the family, individual needs and the community. Usually, the grain offering could not be used on its own, although during a brief visit to the shrine, a person could want to take one as a way of notifying the spirits of the individual's arrival.

Among the Digo people, life force was always taken into account, reported the participant. "Blessings" (*Baraka* in Swahili) was vital and this was known as the life force that was providing life and good health when used to offset the evil forces like witchcraft



(*uchawi*) and the evil eye. This type of force could only be owned and controlled by a few individuals, identified as traditional healers (*waganga*). The skill of controlling the life force in Digo society was passed on through the family. Most children of traditional healers (*wanganga*) learned the art and as time went by, also became *wangangaas*. It was informative that there were more than ten types of Digo spiritual forces. These included witchcraft, traditional therapy, evil eye, fertility force, magic, charms, oath, blessing, curses, healing herbs, medicinal herbs in a small gourd, and diagnosis force.

According to the participants, while some of these were good forces that were used to maintain life, some of them were neutral and could be used for either good or evil. Thirdly, some of them were evil forces that were used to destroy what was good. Concerning the life force, Hiebert (1999:66) explains that it “is the spiritual, non-material substance of life. Life force is vital for health, wealth, worldly power, and success.” According to the researcher, everything that makes life at all is worth living. Another belief or practice the participant emphasised was “the house of God” (*Kijumba cha Mlungu* in Digo language). This was a house where the traditional healers (*waganga*) conducted rites to heal bewitched persons or at times, undertake for those who wanted to invoke the spirits for individual needs. This “house of God” (*Kijumba cha Mlungu*) was usually divided into two rooms. The inner room had no windows and it was full of darkness inside. In it there were instruments used to invoke the spirits and to treat the sick. In conclusion, the unique beliefs and practices of the Digo people clearly classify them as folk Muslims.

#### **4.3.2 Social analysis**

In terms of social structure of Mission among the Digo tribe, participants described this Mission structure among the Digo people showing that, although small in number, it was important for existing Digo churches to be viewed, as a messianic society. Miller (1993) affirms this explanation by arguing that the New Testament church was a messianic society

and that it existed as a micro society within the Roman Empire. One church leader noted that the church in Digoland appeared to be insignificant in size when compared to the number of Muslims that surrounded it; and indeed, it was a micro society within the macro society of Islam, the *Umma*. The participants emphasised that what made a difference in the New Testament era which was also true for the churches in Digoland as affirmed by Miller was that, the church set out to provide an:

... alternative to established society; alternative peoplehood, alternative friendship, alternative family, alternative politics, alternative economy, alternative education, alternative piety, alternative ritual, alternative festivals. Messiah's followers were to live life in another manner than it was normally lived in macro society (Miller 1993:138).

Miller (1993:142) further indicates that the Digo church was called to live out the Sermon on the Mount starting with the beatitudes, which offered an alternative piety. He explains that piety in Islam brings blessings (*Baraka*); while Christ taught His disciples that they would receive *baraka* through their inward heart change. Piety in the ancient world in which the Lord Jesus lived, was expressed in numerous ways: in shrines, temples, cult status, public festivals, pilgrimages, reading sacred writings, sacrifice, prayers recited frequently in the temples, and petitions offered to gods and goddesses. In working as an evangelism coordinator in Digoland, the researcher suggests that the Digo express their piety in a similar manner. Participants spoke of sacrifices in the Digo community and family shrines, prayers in mosques and cultural shrines, Qur'an reading, Islamic festivals, including some popular ones like *Maulid* and beverages that were offered to ancestors on a regular basis on their tombs. One MBB member stated that among the Digo tribe, religion was a foundational structure of their society and with piety, whether Islamic or primal culture, a Digo person received and expressed his or her identity within the cultural parameters. For the Digo tribe, piety also provided protection from the threatening forces of evil magic, sorcery and witchcraft. All

cultural religious activities were deeply rooted in the Digo community in the South Coast of Kenya.

Miller (1993:143) further points out that in the New Testament world, the Church refused the established piety of the shrine and the temple and provided an alternative, which was interpreted as a refusal of the foundations on which state and society rested. As a result, it faced hostility and repression. In response to the hostility that Digo Christians faced from Islam and cultural religion, they had chosen to isolate themselves from the larger Digo society, as one participant stated. From this time, Digo Muslims who were being converted or who were already Christians lived in fear of persecution and this led them to avoid as much as possible any confrontation with Islamic followers. Some participants emphasised that, for Digo Christians to make the gospel effective, they needed God's enabling power to become a missionary people from their point of apparent weakness, which was the same need that the New Testament messianic groups had in their time. Miller (1993:145) states:

Despite uncertainties about many aspects of emerging Christianity, the sources are unanimous in reporting an enthusiastic dedication to missionary witness as the basic characteristic of the relation to macro society. Early on there may have been discussion about the focus of the Mission. Should the focus be on rural areas like Galilee where the movement started or on the urban centres of the empire? Should it be directed exclusively to Jews or inclusively to "all nations"? But there seems to have been little doubt that messianic groups should neither systematically withdraw from dominant society nor Crusade against it. The mandate was to witness peaceably from within the structures of macrosociety to the Messiah who had Himself lived and died within the established order before being raised by God to lordship over it.

The MBB participants argued that for the Digo churches to become missionary people, they needed to live out an unconventional way of life. Where hopelessness was obvious and the shrine gods and spirits did not appear to be answering indeed, there was a need for the church in Digoland to be more noticeable. They were expected not to have any fear, since Jesus had promised in His Great Commission that He would be with His missionaries until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20b).

It was explicit from the participants that Christian denominations in Digoland needed to demonstrate in their approaches the alternative love and power of Jesus Christ. At all costs, love had to be shown to Muslims together with readiness to offer prayer for healing for the many sick people within the Digo communities without first demanding that they become Christians. “God’s love is world-embracing,” said (Shenk 1993:153). The participants indicated that the churches reaching out to the Digo people with the gospel should also keep in view the world in which they lived and seek to present the gospel in terms that were applicable to their culture and worldview. In the researcher’s short time of coordinating Mission work to the Digo people with the SDA Church, he was dumbfounded at how little the Digo Christians knew about Digo culture. The cultural activities, which were going on around them on a daily basis, were foreign to them. When he asked many Digo Christians and those who were trying to reach the Digo about how Digo prayed in their cultural manner or what made the Digo women ask for a ritual dance known as Kayamba, the answer was normally “we don’t know” which would then be followed by, “we are waiting for someone to tell us about that.” It was amazing that they knew things that were going on around them, but had no knowledge of how they were done or for what reasons. Consequently, there was much ignorance among the Digo Christians since few of them came out of their own people’s beliefs and practices. This had isolated the Digo Christian churches so that they could not be a true light in their Mission efforts in Digoland, which saddened some of the participants.

The participants noted that a lot of effort was expended to reach out to the Digo tribe. They suggested that the indigenous Christian church of the Digo people was in the best position to do effective gospel contextualisation in reaching their own people because they were capable of having an “emic” view of Digo culture, as opposed to the “etic” view of the missionary. Hiebert (1983:50-54) affirms the concept of “etic and emic constructs” of culture

which defines the etic as the attempt by an anthropologist to observe people and discover patterns in their behaviour.” The reason was to formulate cultural models based on the observer’s basic assumptions. Emic was the observation and description of a people’s culture from the perspective of the people themselves. Hiebert (ibid) recommends a unified model in which the anthropologist attempts to keep both the “emic” and “etic” model in perspective.

The participants stated that on many occasions, indigenous Christian churches depended on foreign missionaries to come and evangelise their people. In many cases, missiologically, this had not been an effective way of bringing the gospel to people of other faiths. It was only the indigenous Christian church that had the ability to decode faith from the source transcript into the cultural context of the receptors. This process was called “transculturation.” Shaw (1989:145) explains that transculturation is the process by which the surface forms of the source culture of the script are analysed at the “Deep Structure Meaning” so that when it is restructured and communicated to the receptor culture, it produces the same effect as it did with the original hearers of the message. In other words, this involves the receptors taking the Word of God, applying it to their own context, making it theirs, and giving a foundation for Church growth (Shaw 1989:157). As Von Allmen (1975:39) correctly perceives:

To sum up, it may be said that behind the first adaptation of Christianity to a new context, there was a missionary thrust. No true indigenisation or contextualisation can take place because foreigners, the missionaries, suggest it; on the contrary, true indigenisation takes place only because the indigenous church had itself become a true missionary, with or without the blessing of the missionaries.

It was clear that Christian churches in Digoland should be encouraged to empower the Digo Christians and let them know that they were called to make disciples of the Digo in Digo context. In the Digo worldview, it was implicit that the possession of spiritual power to heal the sick or to miraculously enhance the effectiveness in business or work was a core value. Consequently, as Jesus and His disciples used spiritual power to cast out demons and

to overcome witchcraft and harmful magic in the New Testament society, the same could be utilised with the Digo. Through prayer, the churches in Digoland should seek to defeat the devil and evil spirits among the Digo by praying for the sick, those who were possessed by the spirits and those who were troubled by evil spirits (*pepo*). The concept here was that in evangelising the Digo people, everything should be conducted as specifically pertinent to the Digo context, for Jesus was the victor over those evil powers which the Digo people feared, and Jesus was the giver of immortal life.

In Colossians 2:15, Paul affirms that Jesus disarmed the powers and principalities such that they lost their authority to enchain people in their condition of sinfulness.

You were dead in sins, and Your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then he gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for He forgave all Your sins, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of His commandments, which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. In this way God took away Satan's power to accuse of sin, and God openly displayed to the whole world Christ's triumph at the cross where Your sins were all taken away (Col. 2:13-15, The Living Bible).

Indeed, Christ disarmed Satan when he made atonement for the sins of human beings. The RGC member stated that the Digoland Christian churches needed to know that God had provided them with an incredible power to set the Digo people free from the slavery of sin, demonic oppression, and Islamic dominance. Arnold (1992:105) asserts that when people believe in Jesus and receive His forgiveness; the power of Satan over their lives is taken away because "the chief mechanism for holding people in bondage" is sin, and it is propitiated by the power of the blood of Jesus.

Apart from Christ, people did not comprehend that they were captives of Satan and his demons and were given to Satan's service in the name of the so called good spirits and evil spirits. Digo Muslims believed that people were basically good, honourable, and born in an unadulterated state. In other words, the Digo people did not believe that they lived in a fallen state, as Christian theologians taught them. This could be clearly seen by Kateregga and

Shenk's argument about the human condition in his dialogue with Shenk (Kateregga and Shenk 1997). Henceforth, Woodberry (1989:149) states, Christians should share the good news of salvation from sin with Muslim friends, though this is not often heard as good news. The reason for this lies mainly in the fact that Muslims traditionally do not identify people's original spiritual condition as negatively as the Bible does. Therefore, they have not seen the necessity for a drastic way out. Sahih al- Bukhari (1985:284) records that, "no child is born except in a natural state which is Muslim and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian, or Magian, as an animal produces a perfect young animal. The religion of pure Islamic faith (Hanifa) which means to worship no one but Allah has the pure Allah's Islamic nature with which Allah has created mankind".<sup>25</sup>

The insinuation of this belief is that human beings are created pure and blameless, but their surroundings make them acquire either sinful or good behaviours. Sin is not something inherent in human nature but evil behaviours are obtained through an association with evil people. The Qur'an teaches that God created humanity with a natural instinct to follow pure monotheism as taught in Islam (Surah 30). (Surah is verse in the Qur'an) In other words, every child born in this world is essentially born a Muslim, but after birth, his or her environment corrupts and perverts his or her mind and eventually the behaviour (Abdul-Haqq, 1980:158). Therefore, "Islamic theologians generally see no need for human nature to be transformed; only to be guided" (Woodberry, 1989: 149). A reinterpretation of Islamic texts in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions are necessary for Muslims to begin to see the necessity for salvation from sin. Woodberry (1989:150-159), describes at length how certain Qur'anic verses reveal that Adam rebelled against the will of Allah (God). He further argues that God foreknew that Adam would rebel, that the Devil foretold his intention of perverting

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<sup>25</sup> This reference mentioned here can be found in Vol. VI, Book 60, chap. 230, and tradition. 298).

the humans after he disobeyed and that all humans were subsequently affected by this initial fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

The MBB participants said that in reaching the Digo, an explanation of the concept of an initial curse of *Mlungu* (God) which affected all people and the provision of the *baraka* (blessing) of forgiveness through the atoning death of *Isa* (Jesus) that would bring back unity between human beings and God, was of high importance. For those Digo who were strict followers of Islam, they had to be shown that the Qur'an and the hadith thought that humans were corrupted by sin and were in need of forgiveness. Woodberry lists six examples of how the Qur'an and the hadith teach that humans, beginning with Adam and Eve, were responsible for their sinfulness and that the sin of Adam affected the entire human race. Firstly, the angels and Allah were aware that if humans were created, they would be corrupt (Surah 2:30). Secondly, the devil foretold that he would subjugate and pervert the human race to rebel against God in revenge for being perverted by God (Surah 17:16, 62; 15:39-40).

Thirdly, even though as Woodberry put it, "the prophet Adam, in the traditional Islamic view, did not fall; he forgot," he is also shown to have rebelled against his Lord and went astray (1989:151). The Qur'an 20:115 reads,

We tested Adam in the past, but he forgot, and we found him indecisive." But in the same context in Surah 20:121, we read, "They ate from it, whereupon their bodies became visible to them, and they tried to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise. Adam disobeyed his Lord, and went astray.

Fourthly, both in the Qur'an and Bible, Adam disdained his nature as a human being and was desirous of becoming like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:5-6), and of becoming like angels, who were immortal (Surah 20:120). Fifth, Adam and Eve acknowledged that they were at fault (Surah 7:23) and were ashamed of their wrongdoing. Sixth, Adam and Eve beseeched God's forgiveness and mercy to save them from being lost (Surah 7:23). The Digo people also as other Muslims have to come to view the predicament of human beings as that, which requires forgiveness and mercy.



The provision to be forgiven is given through Jesus; without Christ's atonement, forgiveness is impossible. However, one participant argued that this notion is immaterial when the Digo people do not see it as their deepest need. Whiteman (1997:5) indicates that the gospel, which is not contextualised normally, leads to split-level Christianity that is characterised by syncretism and nominalism. This idea has given impetus to the growth of the contextualisation approach in Muslim evangelism. Henceforth, it was clear that in doing Mission work with the Digo tribe, there was a need to enable them to develop their own manifestation of Christianity, one that makes sense to them and matches their worldview, influencing them to be receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Sesi, 2003:205).

#### **4.3.3 Theological reflection**

This subsection of data analysis deals with ecclesiastical and theological issues of MBBs joining Christianity, the challenges faced when joining Christianity and the church's involvement in addressing challenges of MBBs based on the research findings.

##### ***4.3.3.1 Ecclesiastical and theological issues of MBBs joining Christianity***

The MBB participants from all the selected Christian denominations indicated they had joined or were converted to Christianity in various ways. The way each one encountered Jesus was unique, with the following as some of the examples that were being prayed for, being influenced by friends who shared the love of Jesus Christ, reading the Bible and the Qur'an.

The participant from the B.C. said that she became a Christian through prayer. She was sick for quite a long time and went to hospitals but there was no cure, went to *waganga* (traditional healers) with no result, no cure. The more she went for treatment, the more she became sick. Therefore, after trying all possibilities within the Islamic communities, she decided to go to the nearby church for prayers. She did not find a pastor there, but found the

pastor's wife and explained her need for healing from her long-suffering sickness, after which the pastor's wife prayed for her. God healed her instantly and she was set free in the name of Jesus. The following Sunday she went to church and accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of her life. Although it was not easy for her to leave the Islamic faith and join Christianity, she kept on going to church without fear, for many knew what she had gone through with her sickness and the God of Christians had healed her, as she expressed in her thanksgiving. It was a great testimony within the Islamic community for those who knew her. She received a lot of opposition from her fellow Digo Muslims, even to the point of being threatened to be killed, but because of her healing miracle, they left her alone. Her family tried to abandon her, but eventually accepted her and thanked the God of Christians.

From this MBB participant's experience of prayer for her sickness, it is vivid that the Christian witness should attempt to find and understand individual problems and burdens within the targeted people group, and then pray for people directly. Christ Jesus addressed the felt needs of the people he ministered to, in His days of ministry. He expelled demons, healed the sick from various diseases and fed the hungry before He was taken on the cross to die for their sins. The pastor's wife listened to the participant's need and then used that as the window to reach her spiritual need as well. It is clear from this participant's experience that the Christian witness should be ready to pray for needs expressed, praying in the name of Jesus *Isa al- masih* (Jesus the Messiah). This will confirm Jesus' conditional promise that, if His people pray for anything that is according to the will of God in His name, He will do it. The Christians lay hold of God's promises by praying for actual needs of their Muslim neighbours. In support of Christians praying for Muslims' needs, Hiebert (1989:45) reasons that "Muslims' resistance to the gospel is due not only to their creedal simplicity and historical confrontations, but to Christians' failure to deal with the common people's felt needs". The Digo people as folk Muslims are looking for an answer to their problems of

sickness, poverty, demon possession, sorcery and witchcraft. As the participants affirmed, the issue of well-being as persons and as families or communities was a matter of profound concern for the Digo people. They were also concerned about success and failure in life. How their children would pass their school exam to the next level was of great concern.

In the Great Commission gospel command, evangelism as well as social justice was inclusive. Christians were expected to visit and pray for the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked and provide shelter for the homeless in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. James defines the Christians' duty to provide clothing and food for poor believers of the congregation as part of their spiritual duty (James 2:14-18). James goes further to consider Christian faith without social justice or without action as "dead faith" (useless) (Jas. 2:17). In other words, "dead faith" here means "useless" or inactive faith, passive faith, which is worth nothing. According to Gilliland (1997:11), "when Christians show holistic concern, verbal witness about Jesus will be credible and will create a reconciling atmosphere for dialogue." Ultimately, charitable dialogue directed by the Holy Spirit will lead to an understanding that physical healing and liberating experiences are acts of mercy, which were promised by Isa. According to the researcher, when Christian churches demonstrate their mercy through acts of charity and social justices, the Digo people have been seen evidently responding to Isa as "Mercy from Allah" (Surah, 57:27) and as expressed by the MBB participants of the B.C.

Most of the MBB participants from seven selected church denominations; SDA, RGC, AIC, GRC, MC, SA, and B.C., said that they were converted from Islam to Christianity in the South Coast of Kenya through individual Christian friends who led them to Jesus Christ through various forms of love, personal interest, and concern for their welfare. One MBB woman of RGC told the interviewers of a Christian woman teacher she had been teaching with in the same primary school. This Christian woman used to invite her to her house and share the love of God and other concerns of life with her. As they continued their

friendship, at times there was an evangelistic campaign within the area. The Christian teacher and her friends used to invite the Muslim woman to the meeting, which she liked. Because of friendship, she came from a far distance so as not to be detected by her fellow Muslims or relatives in the area. She liked the Christian music, but had no desire at that time to leave her Muslim faith. In times of difficulties the Christian woman did everything she could, to help her. The Christian woman shared with her the love of Jesus; and she was persistent in declaring Jesus Christ and His love for all humanity. The MBB participant declared that she was grateful to her Christian friend for leading her to Christ. She further said that as a Christian for many years, she always attributed the paramount influence in her conversion experience to the friendship, love, and acceptance she enjoyed from that one simple Christian woman teacher.

It was clear from the MBB participants that friendship evangelism was an all-encompassing form of witnessing in which Christian believers were able to share their testimony in an inclusive way. Not only in the matter of spreading the “good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts, 8:12) over continued time to Muslims whom they have befriended, but as well the Christian could minister to them in their needs, hopes, joys, fears and sorrows. It was their conviction and experience that through such compassion and caring, many Muslims were led or could be led to become participants in the similar grace found in Christianity

The SDA participants stated that there were many times when Christians, as the minority in a Digo Muslim environment who were mostly well-to-do, should go to the Digo people who needed the special kind of help that these Christians alone could give since the Digo people were burdened with all kinds of poverty. There would be numerous opportunities of sharing the Gospel if Christians established genuine friendships with Muslims and began to reveal to them the fullness of God’s love in Christ Jesus. Many of

these MBB participants said that Christianity was not just the proclamation of the Gospel although it was freely acknowledged that this was the main manifestation of Christian witness and service. Christianity was also the manifestation of love, concern and social care towards a needy Digo people or the world at large. This can be learned from Jesus, who not only went about “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom” but as well spent much time in “healing every disease and every infirmity” (Matthew 9:35).

MBB participants stated that they advocated friendship evangelism as a model of ministry to Muslims in the Digo Muslim community. They said that it took in the whole person, both in spiritual and in material needs. It empowered Christians not only to proclaim their faith, but also to give evidence by their acts of love.

#### ***4.3.3.2 Challenges faced by MBB when joining Christianity***

The MBB were asked about the major challenges they were facing in the church since they became Christians, how they addressed them personally, and on how the church got involved in solving them. Most of these participants said that since they left the Islamic faith to “become Christians,” they have faced persecution at different levels. There had been attempts of murder by their parents, siblings, relatives and the Muslim community in general. Most said that they were evicted from their homes, divorced by spouses, and fired from their jobs. Some said they fled to a large city because that was the only way they could avoid being hunted to be killed by their fellow Muslims. In these big cities, they were able to become members of churches and marry Christian background spouses. They were able to grow in the Lord, but unfortunately, they lamented that they virtually gave no witness to their own Digo people. The interviewed MBB said that the church did not get much involved with their challenges since most of them were struggling churches in the South Coast of Kenya. According to the participants, the church was not prepared to help them. Most Muslims who were converted to Christianity went back to their old Muslim faith because of the above

mentioned challenges. Participants expressed disappointment in the churches which were not prepared to help new Muslim converts to Christianity.

Five of the participants from different church denominations indicated that it took them more than one year to inform their parents and relatives of their life changing decision. This showed that their decision to follow Jesus was not taken lightly. Many of them lived with doubt and concern through this time not knowing if they would receive a severe reaction. One participant from AIC said even after being a Christian for three years, his family still does not know of his faith. Seven of those interviewed took more than three years to get to this point. When they joined the church, their own family and all their extended family abandoned two of those interviewed from SDA church. These participants said that their immediate family did not wish for the news of their conversion to travel quickly to their other relatives. Their family all lamented their conversion and hunted to kill them. They added that their siblings were not as adversely affected as parents upon receiving the news that the MBB had joined the Christian church; and according to the researcher, they were more accepting than the parents.

The MBB participants said that the rejection by their families and communities was based entirely on the commitment they made to the Christian church. One participant of SA church explained that her family and the community as a whole isolated her. They also considered her as unclean. Since she was considered as unclean, all her possessions were kept separate from the rest of the family members. They indicated that their Bibles and other Christian literature were confiscated. There was continuous pressure to give up their Christian faith, and they lived in an atmosphere of erratic tension and suffering. The MBB participant of MC said that after trying all they could to bring him back to the Islamic faith failed, his family tried to kill him, and he had to be rescued by his Christian friends. The SDA participant said that he experienced a Muslim member of the community spitting on the

ground and mocking him when he was seen with a white pastor missionary. Almost all participants expressed that the church did not understand their challenges, not knowing how to address their needs which included counselling, financial support and dealing with cultural shock. Since they did not know the Christian culture, in most cases they found themselves feeling out of place although in the church. They said that in most cases they felt isolated from the rest of the church members.

Two participants, one from RGC and another from GRC, mentioned that backbiting and divisions within the Church caused them to struggle in their new faith experience. This is a significant point to note as the Christian church works towards converting Muslims to Christ. According to the researcher, the gospel offers and promises so much that a Muslim moving into it, receiving the Holy Spirit, knowing the assurance of salvation that Christ brings, and experiencing the cost of following Him, may have his faith undermined by petty bickering within a specific fellowship, or by theological arguments existing between the many denominations. However, all MBB participants explained that generally they were delighted and happy with their decision of accepting Jesus and joining the Christians despite all these struggles within church denominations.

On the issue of how the MBB participants met the above mentioned challenges, most of them said that they learned how to adjust and continue in their new faith in Jesus. Although it was not easy for them, they trusted that Jesus could help them overcome. Fifty-six per cent (56%) of the MBB participants indicated that if it were not for the help of Jesus, they would have quit Christianity and gone back to Islam. One of the B.C. participants told of one Muslim who was converted to Christianity and how this convert accepted Jesus and joined the B.C. when the missionaries came to the area and reached out to the Muslims. While in the Christian faith he was encouraged to become a pastor, which he did. The missionaries promised to support him and his family, which they did for a while, but then

stopped. His family started suffering from a financial crisis, and even his children were sent home from school due to lack of school fees. In these circumstances, the Muslims approached him and started supporting him, and eventually won him back to Islam. Forty-four per cent (44%) of MBB participants said that were they still not sure what do with their pressing problems, since some of them were completely separated from with their family members, but still have hope that things will be better for them.

#### ***4.3.3.3 The church's involvement in addressing challenges of MBBs***

In asking the MBB how the church was involved in helping them address those challenges, MBB participants from the seven selected churches answered differently but the overall response was similar. MBB participants from AIC indicated that their church did not have any thought-out plan of helping the MBBs. According to the researcher, when they were converted and joined Christianity; the MBB received a cold welcome from the congregation. Hence, their challenges were ignored, but they thank God who saw them through difficult circumstances as they tried to cope. Most of the participants felt that they were a burden to their fellow Christian members. Some members were ready to help but they were also in need like the MBBs.

The participant from the B.C. said that she was concerned as to whether she would have the courage, discipline, and commitment to lead this new life of faith, seeing that the church had no plan to help them grow in the new faith. She felt like she was being put away; and she almost considered turning back to where she came from, but knowing the reaction of her family and community, she felt it was the right decision to stay in the new faith. As the participant narrated her helpless situation, I remembered an instance of a MBB who left Islam for Christianity. The individual was brought to the church I was pastoring for help and to join the church as a member. The church took care of his needs and then thought the best way to help him was to open for him a small retail business where he could support Himself instead



of depending on the church and other people to feed him. It was sad that this did not work for the MBB since he used all the money and closed the store down, and started begging from members of the same church, which had offered him a permanent solution. The church did not know what to do next. Then the MBB disappeared and the church later discovered that he had gone back to Islam. This was not a good experience. However, the church had no better mechanisms to avert the situation.

The MBB from the RGC said that concerning Muslims conversions, the Church should be present and aware, as opposed to absent and unaware; concerned and caring rather than unconcerned and uncaring; sensitive and tactful as opposed to insensitive and aggressive. This MBB revealed that when she was baptised and then told her family, no one from the church helped in this process. There was no refuge and support available within her church. She further said that she was hurt a good deal. She expressed also that MBB may choose not to reveal as much to the church leaders or church members about their background as might be desirable, for they seem to be of no help. All the interviewed MBB stressed that regardless of this, the decision to follow Jesus is so huge that they should have available to them as much support as possible during this initial period when emotions are heightened in themselves, in their families and in the Muslim community at large. The process of integration for these MBBs participants had not been easy in their various churches.

#### **4.3.4 Research implication for Mission response**

The participants, especially the church leaders and frontline evangelists, were asked in what areas the Church should improve for better evangelisation to the Digo tribe Muslims of the South Coast of Kenya. Areas mentioned above as challenges are the ones the participants said need to be addressed and improved for better evangelisation in the area. Participants outlined the areas needing improvement such as more training of the believers on Muslim

evangelism. Another was for church members to love one another no matter where they came from within the country of Kenya, and for them to distance themselves from tribalism. The disunity among Christian denominations should cease. There should be improvement in financing the Muslim ministry among the Digo Muslims. Christians should stop seeing all Muslims as terrorists and people who are ready to kill.

On the issue of training church members in various churches on how to reach out to Muslims, the participants stressed that this must be treated as a matter of urgency even though it required resources and funds to make it happen. It was imperative that the churches should take advantage of investing in human resources. The trainer of trainers, well trained, will be able to mobilise church members to reach out to Digo Muslims and win them back to Jesus. An improvement was needed in Christian denominations for effective Mission to Muslims in this territory. The participants were concerned about the fact that in their churches there was much going and sending members to 'go and make disciples', but there was not much ministry to Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya, except for the SDA church and a few individuals.

According to the participants, there was a need to sensitise all church members towards engaging the Digo Muslims. Some participants were of the opinion that not everybody in the church could be interested in reaching out to the Muslims, but this idea had been overshadowed by other participants who said that by training all church members, the interested members would be identified and then those not interested would support the others in all aspects of Mission. In general, it was paramount that training was significant in all Christian denominations. The church leader participants confirmed that they were ready to support the training of believers, and they indicated that this should not be a one day event, but a continuous training for the churches to be more effective. They emphasised that this vision should be in all churches, not in a few, and that there was no time to waste in this

matter as one participant stated. Some participants lamented that due to the lack of training and awareness among Christians, the Muslims had won many to Islam. There was a need for ongoing awareness and training in all churches in the South Coast of Kenya.

On the issue of financing Mission work to Muslims, the participants recognised the need for the churches to put more money into Muslim work in the area. They indicated that the majority of the Digo people lived in abject poverty. It was clear that this area of poverty should be addressed by those who were reaching them with the gospel and it must be one of the entry points for evangelisation. One of the participants emphasised that if the church was serious about engaging Digo Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya, they should improve their financial giving to Muslim work. They continued to show how the churches' failure to incorporate their Christian faith in taking care of needy people around them portrayed the churches as only concerned with soul-winning, and not caring for the socio-economic needs of the people in the society. However, one of the participants, a frontline evangelist in the area, thanked his church leadership for their effort in supporting Mission work in the area. Nevertheless, he said that they needed to do more and that even leaders from the higher organisation need to come to the area and see themselves how the people are living.

Muslim evangelism in Digoland needs to be given priority in terms of the church's budgetary in this territory of South Coast of Kenya. The participants explained that since 99% of the community was Muslim, Muslims were not doing anything to entice these poor to join Islam, unlike other areas in parts of Kenya with a Muslim minority where the Muslims do much in enticing poor Christian women, men, and unemployed youths with huge amounts of money. Some were given promises to be sent to foreign Islamic countries to get good paying employment. It was stressed that as the Muslims display care of their people in minority areas and give help to the poor around them, that this has gained Islam popularity and attracted Christians to join Islam.

The participants from all the Christian denominations agreed that there should be enough budget provision for the Mission work in impoverished areas. The participants added that if the church would allocate enough funds towards Muslim evangelism, there would be more programmes targeting the engagement of Muslims in a positive way. One participant said that the church should equip its members economically which would enable them to support the church financially towards the Mission to the Muslims.

The participants also indicated that it was critically strategic that Christian denominations in the South Coast of Kenya improved how they treated each other as Christians. It was noted that churches were operated on tribal lines. The people from the coast did not want to see the people from up country as they saw them as people who had come to take their lands. They did not treat each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. One of the participants lamented that this kind of attitude had hindered Mission work to the Muslims in this area. The few indigenous Digo tribe Christians wanted to be on their own, which had not worked out. People from up country as well were so politically motivated in how they treated others and themselves.

It was suggested by the participants that there should be much prayer for tribalism to cease in this region for the work of God to be advanced among the Digo Muslims. The participant from RGC said it was shocking that Christians were aligned to their own cultural relationships. This kind of arrangement was seen to be creating cultural issues among the Christians themselves to forget the Mission of the churches where God had placed them. It was seen as well to bring about cultural prejudices and tribal differences among memberships of the same Christian churches, resulting in unhealthy disunity. The participants stated that while most church leaders in the Protestant churches were not taking these tribal alliances seriously, the Mission of God was not moving forward as it was supposed to. Satan was using this to hinder God's work in the Muslim dominated area. This kind of tribal behaviour had

brought about confusion even among the Muslim background believers, because they did not see it in the Islam religion. Muslims did not have the tribal conflicts like the Christians. Some participants who had interacted with Muslims stated that Muslims do not trust Christians because Christians had displayed themselves as not having faith in each other in terms of tribal issues. The participants from all the Christian denominations felt that tribalism needed to be dealt with for the work to be more effective in Digoland. Church leaders were challenged to take the lead in showing a good example in their preaching. They needed to be led by the Holy Spirit in this ministry, as one participant expressed. Praying together with the same goal of reaching out to the Muslims has the potential to defeat the tribalism enmity.

The participants went further to point out that another area that needed improvement for effective Muslim evangelism was unity among Christian churches. It was explicit that there was division among churches in the South Coast of Kenya based on denominational values. One participant said that even though it was not easy for the churches to come up with an identical approach of doing Mission to the Muslims, unity should be seen, not unhealthy denominationalism, so as to engage the Muslims with love so they will accept Jesus Christ. Participants stressed that Christians from all denominations in the area should know which terminologies to use and which to avoid when sharing the gospel with the Muslims. If Christians from different denominations differed on this issue, then there would be confusion because this would not have been effective. Some participants expressed concern that terms such as “crusades” were seen as an insult to Muslims. Using them in conducting meetings, which were geared towards reaching out to Muslims, was known to aggravate them, because they felt like they were being attacked, due to remembrance of crusades which began in 1095, in which so called Christians killed many Muslims.

Some participants mentioned that another big problem was the way that the Muslims saw evangelical Christians in the area organising ‘crusades’ in strategic Muslim places in an

effort to counteract Bible misinterpretation. The participants indicated that while the meetings were projected as sharing the gospel and correcting these misinterpretations, it was unfortunate that Christian evangelists said things that were provocative to the Muslim communities. For instance, they cursed Muhammad as a false and immoral prophet, they called Muslims to come out from a terrorist religion, Islam, and they emphasised that the Qur'an was not the Word of God. In most instances, this provoked Muslims to start war with the Christians. The participants proposed that there should be awareness and sensitisation among the Christian evangelists and leaders on how to disseminate peace and love among the Muslims. They emphasised that Christians should endeavour to understand Islam as a religion by reading the Qur'an for proper engagement with Muslims with the gospel in love and peace. It was clear from the participants that Christian churches should train their members on how to witness to Muslims with discernment and the wisdom of God. They should have enough knowledge of their Book the Bible as well as of the Qur'anic teachings. In acquiring this knowledge from both the Bible and Qur'an, the sharing of the gospel with Muslims would be much easier and clear without any fear, for one knows what to say from both perspectives.

Additionally, the participants stated that Christians should not fear the Muslims who were the majority in the area, despite the recent burning of churches and shooting of Christians in Likoni, a town in the South Coast of Kenya. They described that some Muslims were obviously a dangerous and violent people who could use any means to stir fear in Christians who attempted to communicate the Word of God to them. However, one of the participants cited 2 Timothy 1:7 which says, "For God has not given us a Spirit of fear, but of power and of love..." which affirms that there should be no fear in engaging Muslims. Christians should show the love of Christ to Muslims in whatever circumstances. The MBB explained that this fear is not only among the Christians but also within Muslims themselves

due to the strict laws and teachings of Islam as a religion. Muslims admire the freedom Christians have in Jesus, but fear the penalties, which would be imposed on them if they accepted Christ and join Christianity. One participant said that the most vulnerable people are the children and women, as they would receive severe penalties for surrendering their inheritance and distinctiveness if they convert from their Islam religion to Christianity.

One participant argued that fear was not necessarily bad for it caused each person to handle conversation or preaching with much care as they shared what they believed about God in accordance to their books, the Bible and the Qur'an. Christians were found to be using a very confrontational approach, which at times was perceived by the Muslims as an attack on their religion. Christians should restrain from this kind of approach for the sake of the gospel of love, which was known to build the Lord Jesus' Kingdom. Participants suggested dialogue between Christians and Muslims to be a way to reduce the fear. The only way each religion could understand each other's religion was through constructive dialogue, which should be done with understanding. Participants also stated that Christians should be willing to change their attitude towards Muslims. One participant suggested that Christians should build more schools in this area and allow their children to mix with Muslim children freely without fear. The participants were unanimous that if all these proposed improvements were implemented that there would be better results as far as Muslim evangelism was concerned in the South Coast of Kenya. More Muslims would be reached and come to faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **4.3.5 Conclusion**

In conducting the field research, the researcher used three focus groups targeting a population of 78 people from various Christian churches in the South Coast of Kenya. The oral interviews were conducted by a way of a question and answer approach using voice recording instrument. The researcher moderated and watched the voice recordings and took notes relating to the conduct of the participants.

After the data collection, the researcher analysed it and arrived at certain findings, main of which is that efforts among Digo Muslims by the Christian churches is an ongoing process. Some of the other ways comprise evangelistic campaigns, personal evangelisms, prayer ministry, and house to house visitation. The participants said that the churches were facing several issues that impacted them negatively in their Mission to Muslims. These include lack of training of believers on Muslim evangelism, disunity among Christian denominations, tribalism, use of terminologies such as Crusades which are unacceptable by Muslims, Christians seeing all Muslims as terrorists, and lack enough finance for Mission work to Muslims in the area, diverse beliefs systems between Christians and Muslims, and misconception of the Bible by Muslims. Some of the participants proposed that disunity among Christian churches should cease, and Christians should stop seeing all Muslims as terrorists and people who are ready to kill. Hence, have proper comprehension of the purpose of Mission among Muslims. In the process the research, the researcher observed that the process of doing Mission in this Muslim area was very slow, as few Muslims were in the selected churches. These findings confirm the researcher's thesis that the select Christian churches are seriously in need of an effective model for advancing Mission to the Digo Muslims. Additionally, the finding justifies that the existing nature of the issue at hand and enhance the feasibility of the model proposed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### A PROPOSED MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO MISSION AMONG DIGO MUSLIMS

#### 5.1. APPLYING THE PASTORAL CYCLE OF PRAXIS APPROPRIATELY

The application of the pastoral cycle of praxis can be helpful in the process of proposing a model for effective Mission among the Digo tribe Muslims. This cycle has taken on extensive significance within practical theology. Ballard and Pritchard observe that:

The pastoral cycle has become widely used in practical theology, and there are a number of variations on the theme.... Such widespread acceptance clearly suggests that the pastoral cycle should be at the heart of any contemporary perspective on practical theology (2006:82-83).

The pastoral cycle is known to have various origins, however, in modern practical theology; Ballard and Pritchard (2006:82) indicate that it has its motivation from the effect of liberation theology. Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005) claim that the pastoral cycle's origins were advanced by liberation theology, as in the Young Christian Workers' "see-judge-act" approach. It was also found in the Segundo's work "*The liberation of theology*" (1976), as it was well-versed by Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, which popularised the pastoral cycle (ibid:188). Similarly, Browning developed a critical correlational model that conforms in several ways to the pastoral cycle. He provided a better understanding of what pastoral cycle means as he noted that:

The view I propose goes from practice to theory and back to practice. Or more accurately, it goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices (Browning 1991:7).

This pastoral cycle is the same as the three-step process proposed by James and Evelyn Whitehead that is similar to the see-judge-act, or the practice-theory action process. They suggest the process of attending, asserting, and then pastoral response (Whitehead & Whitehead 1995:13). This process emphasises that one attends a particular practice or

experience that is then carried on into dialogue within cultural and traditional Christian context where affirmation is made, hence in return leading to a pastoral response.

The term “pastoral concern,” that is taken from the Whiteheads, has been effectively used when explaining pastoral cycle as well. The term “pastoral action,” which is similar to the Whiteheads’ term “pastoral response,” was borrowed from De Kock and has been used in the same way in the cycle of theological reflection. De Kock developed a form of theological reflection known as “open seminary” which he worked with, and fleshed out to the Whiteheads’ approach. He chose to name the term “pastoral response” or “pastoral action.” According to the researcher, this was deliberately done to show that the pastoral cycle should not end up in a theoretical suggestion for action, but should go beyond that and result in specific applications and action (De Kock, 2011:9). This approach could also be utilised in doing Mission to Digo folk Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya.

Bevans (2002:72) sees the term “praxis,” as “action in reflection” and describes it in the following way:

It is reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection – both rolled into one. Practitioners of the praxis model believe that in this concept of praxis they have found a new and profound way that, more than all others, is able to deal adequately with the experience of the past (Scripture and tradition) and the experience of the present (human experience, culture, social location, and social change).

Bevans (2002:71), denies an understanding of praxis that associates it merely with practice. He traces its roots to Marxism. Praxis is rather a method and model of thinking an understanding that Hendriks (2004:22) and De Kock (2011:22) seems to agree with. De Kock believes praxis is the interaction and tension between theory and practice where true knowledge lies (ibid:9). Kim (2007:421), recorded the roots of praxis to be in Aristotle’s thinking, where theory and practice are tangled and where praxis is referred to as, “a purposeful and reflective action initiated through engagement in social situations.” Boff (1987:213), also argues for a tension between theory and practice although he argues that

they are to be distinguished, it is not natural when one attempts to separate the two. However, despite Boff (1987:210) describing praxis as “human activity to transform the world” it looks like he still uses praxis in a “practical sense” as the beginning point for theological reflection. Boff (1987:215) further argues for praxis to hold priority as a starting point for theology in the following manner:

It must first be acknowledged that praxis holds the primacy over theory. This primacy is of an analytical, not an ethical, character. It is not to be understood as one of mechanical causality, but precisely of dialectical causality. It defines how the one factor is the prime, material condition for the existence of the other. Praxis is de facto the comprehensive element of theory; as such it constitutes the space where theory is localised and defined, the space where it arises, develops, and comes to completion.

Boff (1987:198) further argues that considering local practice at the expense of theory is to the disadvantage of praxis itself. In other words, the pastoral cycle should start with the practice of real life. It should not begin by taking abstract ideas and attempting to work them out in local realities. A post-foundationalist approach to practical theology must stress these local realities. Muller (2009:5) explains it thus:

The post-foundationalist approach forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people in real life situations. It doesn't have the aim of merely describing a general context, but of confronting us with a specific and concrete situation. This approach, although also hermeneutical in nature, moves beyond mere hermeneutics. It is reflexive and situationally embedded in epistemology and methodology.

De Kock and Cronshaw (2011:8; 2011:6) indicate that practical theology must start its dialectical process by listening to the “emerging questions” that emerge out of the daily cultural realities of human beings and the church. Chopp (1995:115) says that it seriously takes the present issues of the day Boff (1987:200) emphasises that praxis “prepares the agenda, the repertory of questions that theology is to address.” This brings into realisation that arguing for the local nature of theology is to argue for a contextual theology. Bevans (ibid) portrays the significance of contextual theology in these days. He records the discontent and mistrust of the Third World to the First World Theology, which had

overwhelmed them and forced them to deal with realities inappropriate to their everyday lives. Bevans (1992:10) also highlights that alongside the increasing identity of local churches, the oppressive nature of the older methods ignored and even attacked genuine cultural expressions. He as well indicates that this reminds the people of God of the theological foundations of a local theology as in the idea of the incarnation (ibid:12).

The significance of contextualisation for theology is worked out in the pastoral cycle. Segundo (1976:9) terms this as the hermeneutical circle that starts with experienced reality of a real context. In the discussion of contextualisation, Bosch (1991) also refers to this as a dialectical relationship between theory and practice that has its origins in praxis or experience. Bosch (1991), however, cautions contextual theologians about seeing God as completely wrapped up in the historical process. Further dangers include indiscriminate celebration of a diversity of often-exclusive theologies, which can frequently lead to absolutism. According to the researcher, when these concerns are taken into account, contextual and local realities must not be allowed to control the truth of theology. For one to realise God's presence in history and to start with local issues, means that this individual must begin the process of dialogue from the proper starting point (ibid).

It is important to note that one's own personal experience can give birth to the pastoral concern that starts the pastoral cycle for the practical theology of presenting the Gospel to the Digo Muslims. Boff (1987:160) provides three ways in which theologians can be engaged with this theological process. However, before doing so, he makes some presuppositions in his comments surrounding the idea of "engagement" which need to be taken into account when conferring experience as a starting point for theological reflection. Boff (ibid) also argues that one need not begin theological reflection from experience to be "engaged" Definitively, by nature, every person is engaged to some degree and all theologians "do theology in and from some determinate social locus." Actually, an engaged

theology can be viewed as “traditionalist” or “progressive” and its content can be defined according to one’s ideological position (ibid: 161). There are as well important differences between practical engagement and theoretical engagement (ibid: 168). The three categories of engagement that Boff outlines with regard to experiential and local realities are as follows:

First is the specific contribution model. This engagement is done at a theoretical level where intellectual situations are taken on behalf of a group or individual’s local experience (Boff 1987). However, Boff further indicates that pure theory can only have practical implications through practical involvement. By so doing, it means that one should have certain channels and opportunities to engage with the experience and local reality that one pursues to represent (ibid:169).

Second is the alternating moment’s model. This is perceived as a kind of dualism, where the theoretical and practical moments concur. In one moment, the theologian is reflecting; however, in the other moment, is participating in the actual lived experience of a group of which the reflection forms part (Boff 1987:170). According to the researcher, it is not so much a dualism as it is, rather, a series of alternating movements of the one who is engaging in the process (ibid:170).

Third is the incarnational model. This is where one does not so much identify with a particular group and partake in that lived experience, as much as one is basically connected in the “general life condition and lot of the group in question” (Boff, 1987:170). In certain situations, this kind of identification might make theological reflection hard in terms of the things at which one is at disposal of (ibid: 171).

These three models give a portrait of what kind of engagement is essential for theological reflection that is local and takes into account experience as a starting point for theological engagement in a very practical manner. It is apparent and significant for one to understand that practical theology does not take place in a void. It might look like it unless

somebody is within a particular pastoral cycle or concern, and the people involved would be unable to be concerned. In this regard, Bevans (2002:21) says:

A person can in several significant but limited ways contribute to the contextualisation of theology in a context that is not his or her own. But when a person does this, he or she must approach the host culture with both humility and honesty. He or she must have humility because he or she will always be on the margins of the society in which he or she has chosen to work.

According to the researcher, what Bevans is saying about cultures applies to any specific pastoral concern and which practical theology can use as a starting point of engagement.

Hence, Hendriks (2004:26) emphasise the fact that the laity and believers should be “producers of theology.” Therefore, the best form of theological reflection on the church and her practical engagement flows from those who are actually involved in that church in the contextual dynamics, and who have 'life experience' in that community in question, as is the case with the Digo Muslims of the South Coast of Kenya.

## **5.2 THEORIES OF EFFECTIVE MODEL FOR MISSION AMONG THE DIGO TRIBE**

It is important that theories of effective model for Mission among the Digo tribe and many other Muslim people in Africa be addressed here. According to the researcher, the greatest barrier to Christian Mission among Muslims is not fundamentally Islam as such, but their African traditional worldview, and the manner in which they see religion from their perspective. For instance, when missionaries go to the Digo they need to approach them as traditional religious tribal people, as well as Muslims. In other words, the use of Digo traditional forms as well as Islamic forms is essential for the contextualisation of the gospel among them. The Digo people have assimilated religion into every fabric of life until one cannot see the distinction between religious life and social life. Sanneh (1996:87) affirms this by saying that in the overall African view; religion and society are connected, even if not

synonymous. Mbiti (1975:9) reaffirms by pointing out that religion is found in all areas of human life. It has controlled the thinking of African societies and has moulded their cultures, social life, political organisations, and economic activities. The link between religion and culture has come to the realisation that society exists like a unified whole without distinctions between sacred and secular, spiritual and material, local and universal, and is the ultimate goal of contextualisation. Whereas the word “contextualisation” is new to theological and missiological circles, the idea has always been present since the foundation of the Christian church. Allmen (1975:37) indicates “all theologies, the first theology in Christian history included, i.e. Pauline theology, are the result of a contextualisation.” Johnson (1987) also says that many Jesuit missionaries were culturally sensitive every time they did Mission cross-culturally in Europe and India in the Middle Ages, after the reformation and before the Protestant missionary movement in the nineteenth century.

Coe (1976:19) in his work as director of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (WCC), under the commission on the World Mission and Evangelism, applied the terms contextuality and contextualisation, for the development of theological education in the Third World. In his account to the WCC in 1972, he resisted that contextualisation is different from the earlier terms, such as accommodation or indigenisation, in the sense that it takes into consideration the process of secularisation, technological development, and the struggle for human justice which characterised the historical movement in the Third World.

The term contextualisation as analysed in the previous chapters was also Coe’s (1976:20) preference to the familiar anthropological term indigenisation that tends to be used in terms of how the gospel responds to traditional culture. Coe shows that “Traditional” in this context is assumed to mean something static, which was, but is no longer, in operation. In other words, indigenised gospel is irrelevant to the new phenomenon of the radical change of

cultures in the Third World countries since the Second World War. Hence, contextualisation appears to deliver all that is implied by the familiar word “indigenisation” as well as pressing beyond for the more lively idea that is open to change and is future-oriented (ibid:21). For that reason, the evangelical churches accommodated the term in their terminology with the understanding that contextualisation has been the concern of God and the church from the start.

In developing a contextualisation theory on effective approach for the Digo tribe, churches in Digoland needs to deal with the issues of the Digo cultural religion as much as they struggle with the Islamic influence among them. In this research, I have found that the obstacles of the gospel among the Digo people are not only from their Islamic heritage but also from their cultural religious background. Trimingham (1964:39) observed that the Digo who settled between Mombasa and Tanga had become Muslims at least one hundred years prior to his script. Nevertheless, according to Ludwig Krapf by 1848, the Digo people had come into interaction with Islam, and he attributed their resistance to the gospel to their possible loyalty to Islam (1968:268). However, it is evident that Islam cannot actually claim this control over the Digo people through its teaching, even though the Digo have called themselves Muslims for over one hundred years, because their Digo culture is still clearly in control.

### **5.2.1 Translation as a theory for effective model**

Translation in this section is as Walls (1996:26) puts it, the “exact transmission of meaning from one linguistic medium to another.” This process must constantly struggle with the structural and cultural differences between the meaning of words in the original manuscript and the meaning of words in the receiver’s language. Kraft (1996:238) affirms this by saying that language here means “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols employed by the members of a society for a variety of inter-and intrapersonal purposes such as:



formulating and communicating ideas, inducing others to action, attracting pity, instilling fear, and expressing oneself.” In other words, for accurate transmission of meaning to be possible, the translation should have the original message as envisioned by the original author and received by the original receivers. Sanneh (1989:53) points out that translation has taken a more inclusive approach in which, “the gospel is potentially capable of transcending the cultural inhibitions of the translator and taking root in fresh soil, a piece of transplanting that will in time come to challenge the presuppositions of the translator” Luzbetak (1988:79), similarly explains this method of translation as a:

Truly contextualising translation made not so much by an outsider but as much as possible by and with the local cultural community through dialogue, which *integrates* the Gospel message with the local culture into a single cognitive, attitudinal, and motivational symbolic system. The aim is to plant the seed of the time, and fully Christian (in other words, totally incarnated). The new local church must be *of* the soil—planted, not transplanted, not *merely* translated as in the case of traditional accommodation

Christian translation does not usually stop at the completed translation of the Bible itself. However, it continues into translations of forms and meanings of communicating the Christian faith itself. Bible translation as a level of contextualisation has been widely used since the foundation of Christianity. It is clear that the translation of the Bible did not begin with the Christian missionary initiatives, but was sustained from the Judaism principle of making certain that the Jews had their holy books in the language of those who lived in dispersion. The Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) in order to allow Hellenistic Jews to read the Scriptures in their language. Jobes and Moises recorded that when Alexander the Great conquered the Near East (ca. 333 B.C.), many Jewish people came under the influence of the Hellenistic culture and were disseminated throughout the Mediterranean world, losing their Hebrew language and accepting Greek as their main language. Henceforth, they desired to translate their Hebrew Bible into Greek (Jobes and Moises 2000:20). According to the researcher, translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek was

to preserve the Hebrew culture. In other words, Jewish people were obligated to live as Jews regardless of where they found themselves, and in spite of their change of language.

In the same way, Skemp says that Jerome carried on the translation of the Bible into the Latin language following the order of Pope Damasus I in A.D. 382. Actually, Jerome's intention was to preserve the original truth as written in the Hebrew Scriptures and he sought to base his translation on the truth originating from the Hebrew text (*hebraica veritas* or "the Hebrew truth") rather than LXX, which was in circulation among the Christians and Jews throughout the Roman world (2000:23). This translation was meant "to revise the VL [ *Vetus Latina*] version of the Bible in order to establish a unified, authoritative version for theological discussion and liturgical use in the church" (Skemp, 2000:22).

Groves (1948:39) states that when the Christian message reached beyond the Greek-speaking regions around Alexandria, church leaders were obligated to translate the Holy Scriptures into native dialects, thus "the Sahidic of Upper Egypt, the Bohairic of the Nile Delta, and the Bashmuric intermediate to these." In other words, the Bible was translated into the local languages of the people so that they could have the Bible in their dialect in Egypt. According to the researcher, this translation made evangelisation easy to the local natives of Egypt. The subsequent translation of the Bible in their languages also was believed to have been one of the reasons why Coptic Christianity was spared in Egypt during the Muslim attack in the seventh century (Groves, 1948:84). Similarly, in Ethiopia, the translation of the Bible into the Ge'ez language allowed Christianity to take root in the East African nation before Islam was born. Actually, due to this translation of the Bible into the vernacular of the people, the Ethiopian Christianity survived the Muslim penetration. Hildebrandt (1981:22-23) indicates these translations of the Bible enabled Christians to express their faith in their native language. Walls (1996:69-70) points out that:

In modern times, the Christianizing process in preliterate societies in the southern continents has similarly brought its recipients within the sphere of literary culture and

international communication. But, in principle anyway, it has favoured the growth of *vernacular* literature. Original expectations that Latin, or some Western language, would serve for most important sacred purposes gave way to a recognition that Scripture and liturgy belonged to the vernacular, that the language of prayer is most properly the language of the home. The cultural effects of this are obvious; there are many instances of cultural renaissance caused by the growth of vernacular writing.

In Digoland the translations of separate books of the Bible have been done in the Digo language, *Chidigo*. For example, the book of Genesis has been translated as *Mwanzo*, Exodus as *Kutsama*, Luke as *Luka*, Acts of the Apostles as *Mahendoga Mitume*, Galatians as *Agalatia*, Philippians as *Afllipi*, Colossians as *Akolosai*, Jamesas *Yakobo*, and 2 Peter *Petero wa Phiri*. It was also evident during this research that some gospel hymns have been translated into *Chidigo*. There has also been good development of the Digo alphabet and continuation of the translation of the entire New Testament. It is indeed necessary that the entire Bible be translated into the Digo language for effective Mission among these Digo Muslims.

### **5.2.2 Hermeneutical Theory for effective model**

The Word of God was given to humanity for them to live in harmony with God's will. The hermeneutical theory unfolds on how the Bible is interpreted in such a way as to bring the biblical perspective to people more clearly (Schlorff 2006:17). According to the researcher, the work of interpretation lies between God's written word and the individuals' understanding of what it means to them. Peoples' personalities and various forces, forms, and standards of people's specific culture and historical condition play a major role in determining the process of reaching the true meaning of the Word of God. This section provides a brief description of different models that the church has utilised in history in interpreting the gospel and how she has put it into practical use in various contexts in Mission. Padilla (1981:18) outlines these models or methods of biblical hermeneutics as intuitive, scientific, and contextual

The intuitive method focuses on the situation where the reader mainly concurs with the positions taken by the original text and, hence, emphasises the instant personal application of the Word of God to the lives of the modern readers. Padilla (1981:19) recognises that there are three positive basic assumptions significant to sound biblical interpretation from this method:

First, the assumption that the Bible is intended for ordinary people and is not for trained theologians only, which led the sixteenth century Reformers to translate and circulate the Bible in the vernacular. Secondly, the assumption that the Holy Spirit illumines the meaning of Word of God for the believer; and thirdly, the assumption that the purpose of the Scripture is not simply to lead readers to an intellectual understanding of truth but to provoke a conscious obedience to the Word of God discoursed in the Bible. However, the intuitive approach may lead to metaphorical conclusions, in which the original meaning of the biblical text is misplaced.

Currently, few churches among the Digo, preach the Word of God using this method. According to the researcher, many of them use Swahili, which is a commercial language; hence, they only attract churched people who have come to work in this region of the South Coast of Kenya from various parts of the country. As the researcher worked in this area, he observed about three Baptist churches preach the gospel in Digo dialect (*Chidigo*) and by so doing, they have made some progress in reaching out to them. Through the intuitive method of interpretation, the preacher only looks for passages of the Bible that directly communicates with social-cultural forms on the surface level of Digo's worldview.

The Digo preacher who uses Chidigo and relates the Gospel to the Digo people's cultural subject of authority normally studies and applies the passages in the Old Testament and in the New Testament where God, through the prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles, was encountering evil powers and overcoming them. In other words, the preacher's application is

in response to the Digo's specific issues that make them seek for the traditional healers (*Waganga*), like fear of death, illness and the poverty epidemic, which for many years have left the Digo people in terrible economic conditions. The preacher using the intuitive method in his sermon delivery shows that Jesus came and is present here to cast out all the evil spirits and demons that possess the people.

Many Digo people I encountered testified that they have seen and have been delivered from evil spirits and demon possession and have joined the Christian church. According to the researcher, by the use of the spiritual gift of healing in line with proper biblical interpretation numerous people have been delivered and healed from different illnesses which are believed to be caused by witchcraft and as a result, a good number of Digo people have committed their lives to Jesus Christ. Yet, they often miss the discipleship and teaching that must accompany the miraculous work of Jesus and Paul. According to the researcher, Luke records in Acts 19:8-10 that Paul was involved in supernatural ministries in the context of his teaching. After an individual is healed, discipleship and teaching should follow to enhance growth in a person's faith in Jesus. Most cases in folk Islam and among the Digo Muslims do not care where the healing comes from. A person's healing has so much influence in leading him/her to become a Christian that teaching becomes unimportant. In other words, it is not automatic for an individual to become a Christian by just a miraculous healing, but the element of teaching and care must accompany it. There should be emphasis on the importance of the gospel to the people's lives that are terribly tormented by evil spirits and illness, hence this will attract many Digo who are looking for spiritual deliverance and healing. The Gospel presentation should relate to the Digo worldview and be made culturally relevant (Dye 1980:122:123), as Jesus is presented as God, who has authority to meet the Digo's needs.

The scientific method focuses on the position of the contemporary reader that is different from the context of the original text. The interpreter uses the tools of literary criticism to comprehend the language, historical situation, and anthropological studies of the biblical writers. The biblical message is rooted in historical undertakings and the language and cultural backgrounds of the biblical writers. The major aim of this method is to reach at the envisioned meaning of the biblical writer and then to create a theological link to share that meaning to the modern readers of the Bible (Padilla, 1981:19).

Scientific method is what Wright (2000:36-48) terms as “author-centred” interpretation. The method, which uses the text as a window through which the interpreter may be able to see what is on the other side of the text. The focus of interpretation stresses the grammatical-historical approach, which seeks to create the original words and meaning used by the writer at the time of the original writing. This approach also attempts to go back in history to create the text in its original context, by historical critical method, source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism. According to the researcher, this method seeks to let the Word of God speak from its original position; and it assumes that biblical revelation was not theoretical, timeless transmission of a divinely written tablet from heaven. Goldsmith (1983:19) points out that, “the written word clearly reflects the background of the human writer.” Usually, not many teachers and preachers of the Word of God have had the advantage of theological training. Some of those who endeavour to work among the Digo have high school level education, with no adequate theological tools to assist them to do any significant scientific interpretation of the Bible.

The contextual approach is described by Padilla (1981:18) as that which “recognises both the role of the ancient world in shaping the original text and the role of today’s world in conditioning the way contemporary readers are likely to ‘hear’ and understand the text”. It seeks to communicate the message of the original text from its historical context to the

modern readers in their cultural context. The intention the significance of the text may produce the same kind of effect on their lives as it did on the first readers and hearers.

According to the researcher, for those who intend to do effective Mission work among the Digo tribe, it is clear they must understand the Digo's historical context. Without adequate attentiveness of the historical factors, the faith of the Digo and other African peoples as Padilla (1981:18) puts it, "will tend to degenerate into a 'Culture-Christianity', which will continue serving unredeemed cultural forms rather than the living God." The development of the "hermeneutical circle" by Padilla, illustrates the dynamic of interplay in the process of interpretation. Padilla explains this hermeneutical circle in four key steps. First is the interpreter's historical situation in their specific cultures, from where they develop their language of expression, patterns of thought and conduct, emotional reactions, methods of learning, values, interests, and goals. This kind of reference forms the meaning of the message that fits the interpreters' worldview.

Second is the interpreter's worldview. The interpreters pick up the reality that enables them to see the truth as entirely complete by this way. According to the researcher, the interpreter's worldview tints their comprehension of Scripture such that their interpretation implies their worldview. In this case, normally the communication of the gospel from one culture to another usually involves the culturally basic assumptions and principles of the communicator.

Third is the study of the Scripture, in order to ascertain the original envisioned meaning of the text. In this case, the interpreter allows the text to dialogue with the modern historical context into a specific way such as to "transpose the biblical message from its original context into a particular twentieth century situation" (Padilla, 1981:20). This kind of interpretation allows the Scripture to speak without imposing upon it unbending approach based on a given theological method.

Fourth, the interpreter sorts out theological interpretation in the new context of the receivers' culture. "Theology cannot be reduced to the repetition of doctrinal formulations borrowed from other latitudes" (ibid:21). Contextualised theology is communicated in the symbols and thought forms of the receivers' culture. Such a theology answers to the questions that are raised in that context. The purpose of this interpretive development is to bring about transformation to the lives of the people of God within their real circumstances.

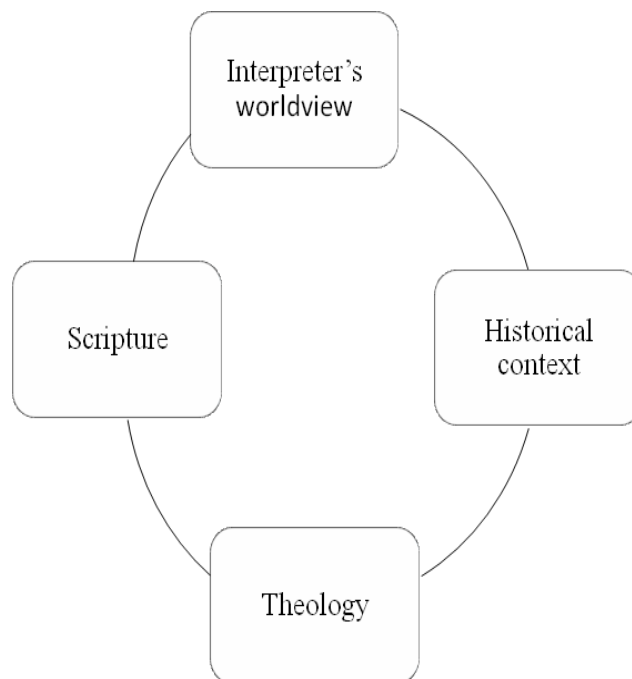
According to the researcher, Gilliland (2002) explains contextualised theology as follows:

The dynamic reflection carried out by the particular church upon its own life in the light of the Word of God. Through this process the church, through the Holy Spirit, continually challenges, incorporates and transforms elements of the cultural milieu, to bring these under the Lordship of Christ. As the members reflect upon the word through their own thoughts, employing their own cultural gifts, they are better able to understand the gospel as incarnation ("*Doing Theology in Context*" 2002).

In the process of doing theology for a specific context, the hermeneutical circle given below is useful. Nevertheless, correct contextualised theology in itself could not be effective in the process of sharing the gospel to the unreached people groups and making new disciples for the kingdom of God. Contextual method provides both the context of the original text and the context of the modern reader in its proper perspective.



**Figure 21: Hermeneutical circle (Padilla, 1981:22)**



In other words, this process of interpretation gives emphasis to the significance of culture to the biblical message in its original shape and context and to the appropriation of the importance of the message in a modern context. Hence, the biblical message could not be separated from its specific cultural context. Though, the hermeneutical circle is merely good where the Word of God has already been translated and where sufficient work on the historical and grammatical study of Scripture has been completed. Henceforth, the church evangelists and missionary to the Digo tribe has to do more than the hermeneutical circle to be able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Digo people.

According to the researcher, through the contextual model for Christian witness, the interpreter pursues to formulate contextual approaches of sharing the gospel so that the receiver may obtain the truth and respond correctly to it. In other words, in such truth encounters, the aim of contextual Christian witness is to make disciples who speak biblically balanced faith within a local cultural context. It is important that for the church to be contextualised as God's hermeneutical community, which would at the end bring about a

“new, open-ended reading of Scripture with hermeneutic in which Gospel becomes mutually engaged in a dialogue whose purpose is to place the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ” (Padilla 1981:23). Because of this, the gospel would become significant in the new context through the people of God for the demonstration of the presence of Jesus Christ among the Digo tribal Muslims.

The Holy Spirit at the same time illuminates both the interpreter of the text and the receiver of the gospel so that they both encounter the faith and grace of God. The receiver is passive recipient but an active listener of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The receiver should be active in such way that he engages the truth of the gospel in the process of interpretation. This model of contextualising is what Wright terms “reader-centred focus” (2000:48). Whereas, “listener-centred focus” can be more applicable to the context of the Digo people, where the majority of them cannot read and write; and they rely greatly on oral communication of information from one generation to another. The reader or listener-centred focus treats the gospel text as a mirror, which can simply reflect who and what is before it, as Wright (2000:48-49) describes it:

And so, this is saying that the meaning in the text is not something, as it were, fixed and final in the text—some sort of objective reality. The meaning of the text actually only arises, only happens, in the act of reading [hearing]. It is when the reader reads that the text means, just as it is only when you look in a mirror that the mirror reflects you. So, meaning is the interaction then between text and reader.

It is significant in the hermeneutical development, that the listeners are taken seriously, as they hear the gospel and apply it to their lives. Although, it is evident that the gospel is not some form of objective reality, that has self-determining, final, fixed meaning. Even though the envisioned meaning of the original writer remains the same to the original listeners, the significance of the text would change in the process of transferring the message to different listeners. This is well explained by Wright (2000:49-50):

The meaning of the texts does relate to and cannot ignore, who is doing the reading and what they bring to their reading from their own cultural background, presuppositions, assumptions and so on and where they are reading, that is what is their position, both geographically, their culture, their position within the culture, their social, economic, political interests, and soon. All those aspects of the readers' contexts will affect the way in which the meaning is articulated and applied.

However, listener-centred focus alone may lead to some form of biased interpretation of the gospel. Listening to other people's views broadens the standpoint of the listener. The listener-centred focus could lead to a self-centred method to hermeneutics, which would reverse the envisioned meaning of the writer or eradicate the writer altogether from the course. The focus should be on an inclusive theory, that takes all the three methods seriously rather than placing stress on only one of the three. For instance, when the readers are from other religions, like in this situation the Digo Muslims, their context becomes more significant in the process of gospel interpreting for them. According to the researcher, the Digo Muslims always have a problem with the notion of God as the Father and Jesus being the Son of God. Actually, the Digo people hear the gospel from their primal worldview and their Islamic worldview, and their interpretation of the biblical message as Digo African Muslims may be diverse from the interpretation of Muslims in other parts of the globe.

### **5.2.3 Incarnation theory for effective model**

The incarnation theory allows the gospel to be contextualised and assimilated or acculturated to the intended people groups (Goldsmith, 1983:20). In other words, there is "acculturation" or "inculturation" of the gospel as used by Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertzin (1996:19) reference to the encounter of African culture with Christianity with a sincere intention of "Africanizing Christianity." According to the researcher, in this model the gospel finds a proper place in every culture it has been proclaimed to. Christianity takes on local practices and terms that look different from the practices and terms of the missionary. Walls' (1996:47) theory of incarnation thus, "incarnation and cultural specificity"

communicates the Gospel of Christ as an incarnational faith for the reason being that Jesus, became lived in a particular culture. Walls (ibid) argues that Islam and Judaism are based on a book, that might not be incarnated to any local culture, though not translated into the same languages:

At the heart of Jewish faith, as at the heart of Islamic faith, is the Prophetic Word of God that speaks to humanity. At the heart of the Christian faith is the Incarnate Word of God that became human. The divine Word was expressed under conditions of a particular human society; the divine Word was, as it were, *translated*. And since the divine Word is for all humanity, he is translated again in terms of every culture where he finds acceptance among its people. The unchanging nature of the Prophetic Word of the Qur'an, fixed in heaven forever in Arabic, produces a single Islamic civilisation recognisable, despite all the local variations, from Indonesia to Morocco (Walls 1996:47).

In this case, it is clear that in order to clearly communicate the gospel, Christianity should be incarnated into every local culture. In Walls theory, incarnation is about making the gospel understandable to every society in the cultural terms of the people. For the gospel to be effective in its transmission, it has to be incarnated in every local culture. In other words, this is a phase of transmitting the Christian faith that cannot be attained by simply translating the Bible into a new language. Actually, completing a testament translation into a native language is the commencement of the process, not the end in itself (ibid).

For the communication of the gospel message to effectively take place in the Digo people context, Christian faith should be translated into a contextual form of encountering truth. Walls (1996:47) says that “Christian faith, then, rests on a massive divine act of translation, and proceeds by successive lesser acts of translation into the complexes of experiences and relationships that form our social identities in different parts of the world auditorium.”

In other words, the Bible in this context becomes the form that carries the message of salvation. Rather than the Bible becoming an end in itself, it is the means of transmission.

Theologising becomes essential for every culture in the society. Consequently, the people's cultural setting has to relate with the message of the Bible. Similarly, Kaleli (1985:40) states:

So the Bible is the form that carries the biblical message. It is the biblical message that must interact with a people's cultural situation. The biblical message is clothed in biblical forms, and therefore, it must be seen apart from the biblical forms and then be communicated in the worldview of the people.

The Digo worldview should be taken into consideration when communicating the message of the Bible to them. The Bible message should be shared through the worldview of the Digo. The Bible message should be translated in such manner that the practices of the Digo culture become the means of transmission. In this case, the Bible message has to be translated into the Digo local forms of speech. According to the researcher, even Islam as a religion has not succeeded in transforming Digo culture because as Sanneh (1989:212) put it "Muslims ascribe to Arabic the status of a revealed language, for it is the medium in which the Qur'an, the sacred Scripture of Islam, was revealed." According to Islamic law and their established paradigm, Islam cannot be translated into any vernacular, in such a way that people may approach Allah (God) in their local cultural forms. Sanneh suggests that this Islamic paradigm accounts for the key difference between Christianity and Islam, in the way they function in a new culture as a missionary movement (Bosch, 1991). The people who learn Arabic as a language of worship attain a social status in the Islamic community. Hence, any Muslim who converts aspires to learn Arabic adequately to be able to pray and communicate in the original language of the Qur'an. This makes those who cannot put more effort in learning the Arabic remain in the lower social section of the Muslim community, and this can be clearly seen among the Digo Muslims.

Actually, among the Swahili people along the coast of Kenya and Tanzania, where the Digo people are included, there are two groups of people. The first group is the *Waungwana* who are the distinguished ones, which includes people who have the opportunity of learning

the Arabic language and are as well the masters in the city. The second group is the *Washenzi* or ordinary people, those without education of standard manners. Education of standard manners in this instance means in religion and Arabic customs. Normally the *Waungwana* learned the customs of the Arabs and behaviours of the town owners and are considered great people. For instance, in Lamu which is a town the coastal province, Middleton (1992:93) says that people “are ranked according to ancestry and in terms of categories of inclusivity and exclusivity.” The *Waungwana* in Lamu include *Wenye Mui* (the owners of the town), *Banu Lamii* (the children of Lamu), *Watu Wakuu* (the great people), *wenye Ezi* (the owners of power), and *wa-Amu* (the Lamuans). These *Waungwana* are known to have acquired a new custom called *Ustaarabu* meaning clean and respectable people. However, a large number of these *Waungwana* are only found in the cities and urban areas along the coast. According to the researcher, the majority of the rural Muslims practice Islam with a substantial mix of their traditional religion.

In the South Coast of Kenya, among the Digo people, the *Waungwana* are the minorities and as so, they are not able to affect any tangible change in belief and value systems of the Digo worldview. Islamic education in most areas is now conducted in the Swahili language, and this has enabled many Digo young people to learn the basics of Islam at earlier ages. Baida (1993:231) affirms that, “there has been a progressive departure from a conception of Islam based on the Arabic linguistic legacy towards an ever-increasing use of Kiswahili as the language of Islam in East Africa” This kind of situation provides the Christian Mission a crucial opportunity to bridge the gap through the incarnation of the Christian faith in Jesus Christ.

The incarnation has been known to be the historical event for the Mission of the church. God Himself incarnated through Jesus Christ into one specific culture of the Jews living in Palestine towards the end of the first century B.C. and in the commencement of the

first century A.D., God continues to incarnate in every culture of human beings through the church as an agent. According to the researcher, the church has, in the past, been incarnating all through the ages in different cultures as the message of the gospel moved from an all-Jewish congregation in Jerusalem to an all-Gentile institution in Europe. The truths of The Faith, in Digoland, must be expressed in the local culture and be incarnated into people's cultures and civilisation.

For example, the missionary Richard G. Lewis was challenged with the obstacle of an irrelevant gospel in northwest Kenya when he attempted preach to the Pokot people about the sinfulness of humankind and God's provision to forgive through Jesus Christ. He only discovered the Pokot had no concept of "sin" as we know it in Christianity. All concepts about original sin and a devil that corrupted our first parents who were Adam and Eve to disobey God were new concepts. However, he began to make a development in sharing the gospel when one day he attended a sacrificial ritual where the village elders sacrificed a male bull following the directions from an old prophetess in order to eliminate a curse from a couple who were not endowed with children. "Through this *atowowo*, or sacrifice, they believe peace was made between the clan and Tororot (God)" (Lewis, 1991:34). In other words, the sacrifice he observed, helped him to understand the Pokot people and it became his bridge to talk about the curse of sin and the peacemaking sacrifice of Christ Jesus. The Gospel message must be 'incarnated' in significant ways in every context.

### **5.3 A BIBLICALLY BASED MODEL FOR MISSION TO THE DIGO TRIBE MUSLIMS**

This study proposes a biblically based model that presents the Gospel to the Digo tribal Muslims in their context. According to the researcher, after having examined the profile and current Mission approaches of the selected Christian churches in Digoland in chapter four, it is clear that the Digo Muslims have not effectively responded to the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. The approaches that churches and missionaries are using have not been effective so far in reaching them. This is evidenced by the very low percentage of the Digo Muslim background believers represented in the selected churches.

The mistakes that the missionaries made by introducing approaches that were inappropriate in cultural contexts are still continuously repeated in Digoland and the churches adopted them without considering their effect and context. Chapter three of this thesis has deeply dealt with some historical issues of Mission approaches to the Muslims, which did more harm than good in Mission work during the dark ages. These approaches like the crusades and polemic debates have created hostility between Christians and the Muslims, because they aim at winning the Muslims to join Christianity in an ineffective manner. The two religions in Digoland compete with each other as Christians want to convert Muslims to their religion and Muslims want to convert Christians to their religion. The current manner of doing Mission work is what I call “man-made strategies” which in my opinion are not led by the Holy Spirit and are not biblically guided Mission strategies.

The Bible is an important resource for shaping any approach of Mission to any particular unreached people or group. This fact has already been established in chapter two of this thesis where I analysed the Bible and the people of other faiths. The Bible documents how God has been, is presently and will continue to minister to the needs of people through the eras. The Bible narrates how God sent His only begotten Son Jesus to the world to become a sacrificial Lamb offering for the sins of humanity (John 3:16). Jesus incarnated and became like one of us in order to save us from the bondage of sin. Jesus never condemned sinners, but He loved and ate with them and He never isolated Himself from the sinners. Jesus contextualised Himself with the people He ministered to. Jesus’ incarnational approach, if well applied by the churches in Digoland, will bring much success and the gospel will be well received by the Digo Muslims.



### **5.3.1 Jesus' approach as an effective biblical model among the Digo Muslims**

Jesus' approach alone will bring true success in sharing the gospel with the Digo Muslims. The Bible portrays Jesus Christ as one who mingled with the people He came to save. He did this as one who sought after their good with patient and kind love. He showed His sympathy for the people as He ministered to their many needs, and in the process, He won their confidence; and then called them to follow Him and made them His disciples (White, 1942:143). In analysing Jesus' approach, it is clear that it opened up dynamic relationships among the people He mingled with. Jesus was able to form amazing attachments as He sympathised with them. According to the researcher, Christ's approach forms a holistic model of the gospel; this should guide the ministry of the church in sharing the true gospel in an effective manner. Genuine supernatural love has the power to overcome all forms of resistance to the Gospel in any culture. It is clear that much of the previous ministry to Muslims in Africa has lacked divine love.

All the steps in Jesus' incarnational model will work together powerfully in the South Coast of Kenya and will produce effective results among the Digo Muslims who are deeply hurt, enslaved and damaged by sin. In other words, everything that has gone wrong in Digoland and in the world because of sin is well addressed by God's reconciliation with humanity through Jesus' holistic incarnational model of ministry. The Bible presents Jesus as a simple poor infant born to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth (Luke 2:7). As the son of man, Christ did not come as a King who knew it all, or as an honoured man. His earthly Father was a simple carpenter who worked hard for a living. Jesus was taught and he learned the parent's language as a child, he grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40). Jesus grew and continued to learn the culture of his people. He was neither born with knowledge of the language of His people nor the complexities of their culture. He obeyed His parents and followed his family beliefs, customs and worship

lifestyle. As His parents took him to the temple, He listened attentively to the teachers of the law and asked good questions (Luke 2:46). It took Jesus as God incarnate and the Son of God to study the language, culture and the lifestyle of the people. He came to serve for about thirty years in order to link humanity and divinity together and set the example of incarnation to His church on earth. He was a humble Spirit-filled servant committed to prayer and He loved and sacrificially served people within their cultural context by applying Holy Spirit strategies instead of man-made wisdom and thus, He effectively 'destroyed the works of the devil' and was able to set captives free.

#### ***5.3.1.1 Jesus, God the incarnate mingled with the lost***

Jesus the Saviour mingled with and desired the good of the completely individual and whole humanity, even as He ministered to those who the people had deemed “the worst sinners.” It is remarkable in this model of God incarnate, to see Jesus, the One who made all created things (John1:3), taking upon Himself human flesh and in the flesh mingling with and ministering to fallen humanity. According to the researcher, on many occasions He was seen reclined at the dinner table eating with sinners, and fellowshiping with people who would be deemed as undesirable in the community.

The Digo tribal Muslims fall in this category of society in my assessment with their kind of lifestyle, including poverty mixed with witchcraft, which can be undesirable to the Christian community. Essentially, it is not a new and a strange thing in some places when Christians are spotted mingling with Muslims and are condemned by other Christians who see Muslims as completely lost sinners who have no place in the kingdom of God. According to the researcher, this is not new, as Jesus Himself was questioned by the Pharisees as to why He mingled with outrageous people. Jesus replied and challenged them to learn the meaning of mercy in contrast to sacrifice. “But go and learn what it means: “I desire mercy and not

sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”” (Matt. 9:13, NKJV).

It was unfortunate that Jesus had to tell religious leaders to learn one of the most essential truths of their own faith. This is an important lesson that the church leaders in the South Coast of Kenya should learn as they attempt to do Mission among the Digo Muslims. Typically, it is easy to judge the actions of others by using your own preferences as the standard. It is important for the Christians to learn to humble themselves, put self aside, and follow the Holy Spirit to translate mercy into action and to humbly put self aside and follow the Holy Spirit to put faith and love into effective ministry to the Muslims. However, it is essential that Christians should mingle wisely with the people of other faiths.

In the Bible, Christians are called the salt of the earth (Matt.5:13), nevertheless, this salt can lose its taste, and when its taste is gone, it’s thrown out and useless. As Christians mingle with the Muslims, they should be careful to not let them rob them of the unique and divine taste of Jesus. Christians must take caution so they are not caught up in the fallen principles of the world, which can even be called 'wisdom' in the church. At the same time, it is of no good for Christians in a Muslim community like in the South Coast of Kenya to isolate themselves from the Muslims in order not to be negatively impacted or influenced by their way of life. Christians should be ready to associate with the unreached people groups within their reach and they should have relationships of love with them and be effectively involved in their day-to-day lives. They have to be with them in the world and yet not being 'of the world' partaking of their ways, when their customs and practices are clearly in contrast to Jesus' Ways. Their relationships are to be for the purpose of drawing them to Christ (John 17:). The Muslim world needs to have what the Christians have been given in Christ Jesus. It is what they have received from Jesus that gives them their imperative to reach people of other faiths with the gospel. True Love compels those who have received so much to reach

out to those who are living in darkness (Matt. 10:8). According to the researcher, the Christian community must be careful about seeking to protect themselves from the world in such a way that they never meet the sinful souls in it, Jesus and His disciples never lived that way. In other words, it is easy for those who are called by the name of God, to stay in their own spiritual and theological comfort places and become introverts, which eventually may turn into self-centred religion and will never reach a lost world.

In order for Christian churches in Digoland to avoid such self-centred religion, they should do a demographic analysis to know their neighbour the Digo Muslims and for them to better serve and love them. Christian leaders need to mingle with Muslim leaders, and Christians and Muslims as residents of the community need also to mingle together. In this process of mingling, Christians will seek to know what the real needs of the community of Muslims are and then to practically devise ministries to serve them. Christian service to this community in this manner will be relevant and well received because the community that is served has been involved and invited to be given its input in the process. This will establish trust in the community between Christians and Muslims. In other words, the church joins the struggling Muslim community and then decides together how they can collaborate towards solving the community problem. In this process, there is a mutual ownership and buy-in of this partnership to meet real needs. Undeniably, Jesus was a great mingler and the church as the body of Christ should mingle like Jesus loving the poor and the lost. The church like Jesus should make friends with sinners. Jesus attended the sinners' parties, and met them wherever they were. However, Jesus never compromised His faith, but He loved to go where there were sinners yet He lived a life of holy love. He had His priorities straight. He came to save sinners. That was His Mission, and this should be the Mission of the Christian church.

**Figure 22: Jesus eats with publicans and sinners**

**Jesus**



***Source: Alexandre Bida, publisher: Edward Eggleston, New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1874.***

Jesus calls His church to show love and be kind to people in spite of the fact that they hate you or are your enemies. According to the researcher, Jesus linked His acts and attitude with the character of God Himself. ““But love your enemies, do well to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”” (Luke 6:35, NIV).

According to Jesus, the two greatest commandments are love to God and love to one’s neighbour (Luke 10:27,28). He also showed His followers who God and neighbours are (Luke 10:29-37). No, wonder, in Jesus’ life from beginning to end was an expression of the pure love of God, who Himself is love (1 John 4:16). Therefore, Christians are to reflect the character of God, to the Muslims who are perceived to be terrorists and enemies to the Christian church. The greatest “excuses” that people of other faiths have used to reject Jesus and Christianity as a whole has been professed Christians themselves and especially their

lack of love. The Digo Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya, observe the lifestyle and the attitude of the Christians and are often put off. However, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is imperative that Christian churches in Digoland, reveal Christ to Muslims through their own lives of love. Therefore, nothing can do this more powerfully than the kind of love expressed by Jesus Himself being expressed in the Christians' lives as well.

#### **5.3.1.2 Jesus, God incarnate sympathised with the lost**

As Jesus mingled with people during His earthly ministry, He encountered situations that exposed His sympathy and compassion for them. "As Jesus went out He saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them" (Matt. 14:14 NKJV). In explaining the sympathy of Jesus, first, one must understand what sympathy is. In essence, sympathy means "with *pathos*," and "*pathos*" (Greek word) is related to pity, tenderness, or sorrow. It means being "with" somebody but in a deep way. Further, sympathy brings to mind other related words, such as empathy and pity. According to various dictionaries, compassion is pity, sympathy, and empathy. Pity is sympathetic sorrow for one's suffering. Empathy is the ability to understand or share the feelings of others. For instance, Jesus always walked in the shoes of the people He ministered to. He really understood their heartaches and needs because He really knew them and had sympathy for them. He was able to meet their needs as he said "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin...since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered. He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 4:15, 2:18).

Compassion also comes from the Latin word *compati*, which means, "to suffer with." As those who have experienced suffering, Christians should understand the suffering of others; and just as we often receive compassion and sympathy in our suffering, we should be willing to do the same for others in their need as well. Sympathy and compassion involves

setting self aside, and it can often make those exercising it vulnerable to suffering with someone and this empowers one to move the person towards restoration. In other words, compassion and sympathy shows that it is not enough to understand what others are suffering from, but wants to help alleviate and remedy the suffering and is willing to suffer in ministry. True compassion leads towards comforting and actively helping people in need in the practical ways as Jesus did. According to the researcher, showing sympathy was also a crucial way Christ reached people. It is imperative that churches in Digoland in their endeavour to reach out to the Digo Muslims with the gospel must learn to suffer and sympathise with them in manifold ways, just as Jesus did.

#### ***5.3.1.3 Jesus, God incarnate ministered to needs of the lost***

The Lord Jesus Christ knew more about the people He came to save than they knew about themselves. He knew them as He mingled with them, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt. 9:35). In many accounts in the Gospels Jesus showed that He not only knew what people were thinking (Mark 2:8), but, He also knew their histories (John 4:18). He knew the needs of the people, and it was to those needs that He ministered. According to the researcher, He even knew the needs that went below the surface. This reality is seen in the story of the paralytic. Although it was clear on the surface that he needed physical healing, there was something deeper there, which was the greatest need, so even before Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk, He said to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5).

It is important for the church to know that the people they are ministering to are creatures who have been damaged by sin. In other words, whatever the other surface needs are, they are also in need of grace, of assurance and of the knowledge that there is a God who loves them, who died for them, and who wants only the best for them. The Digo Muslims

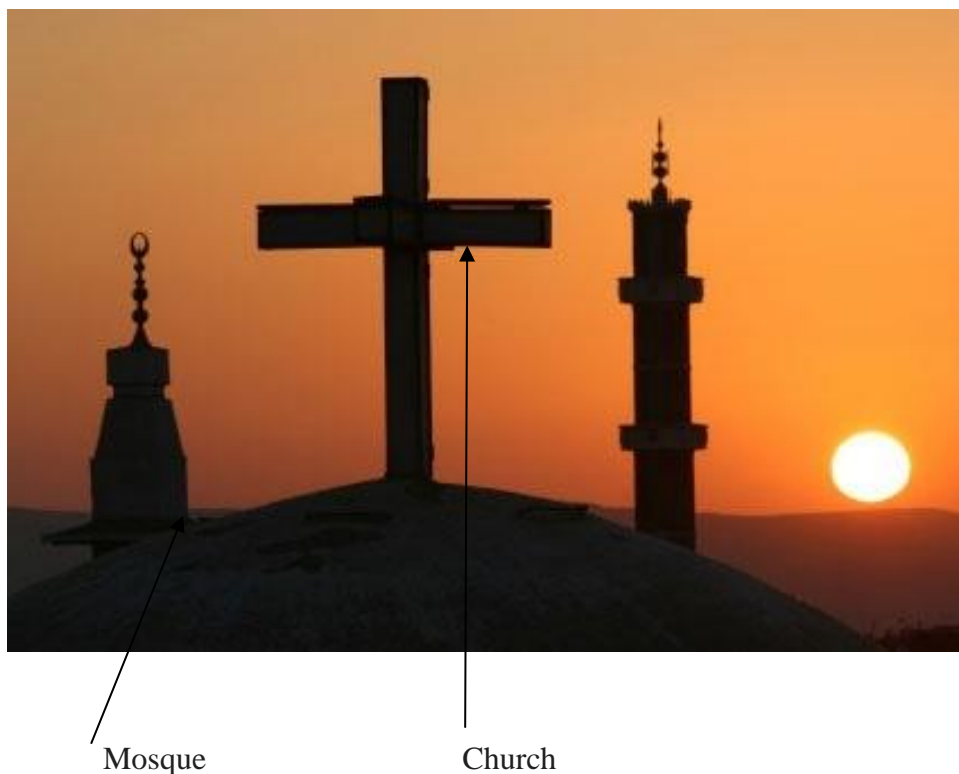
need this kind of assurance. In order for churches to know what needs to be done to serve others in their community, they need to put forth the effort of talking to these people about their needs, and to let them know that they are being cared for. This will inform the churches how they can serve them in ways that are appreciated. This also creates an avenue of making new friends in the community. I am certain that the churches in the South Coast of Kenya can break down the severe opposition between Christians and Muslims by taking personal interest in them as they mingle together in various public places within the community. Jesus Himself took a personal interest in men and women while He lived on this earth. He healed the broken-hearted, set the captives free, made the lame walk again and restored eyesight for the blind (Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 11:5, Luke 4:18; 7:22, II Corinthians 3:17, Hebrews 1:9). Jesus toiled and ministered to the people day and night as affirmed by the Psalmist as he says, “Behold, He who keeps Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalms 121:4). In Christ’s model, the work of redemption to humanity is ongoing, it is a continuous one.

In the South Coast of Kenya, the Digo Muslims have many needs that can only be addressed by following Jesus’ approach. These needs vary from poverty needs to economic needs, social needs to spiritual needs, individual needs to communal needs. For the Christian churches to minister effectively to these Muslims they should have a clear vision of how it can minister to these needs, and it is crucial to develop a plan whereby all church members or a church as a unit in the South Coast of Kenya, can work together in order to make this vision a reality. The churches should develop a strategic plan that is based on input from at least three sources: (1) input from biblical principles (2) knowledge of community needs; and (3) input from the church members. These can be done by holding brainstorming meetings during which all church members are invited to share their ideas and dreams for outreach and for improving their way of reaching out to the Muslim community. At times, as the church leaders think about the process required to meet their Muslim community’s needs effectively,



they might think, it takes too much commitment and time. Hence, they may be tempted to take shortcuts. However, Jesus in His ministry never took shortcuts, and this should be the same for His church. He took time to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sorrowing, and to heal the sick. Jesus knew His neighbours well as He ministered to them. The figure below shows a church in a Muslim community, demonstrating how the churches in Digoland should stand tall in holistically ministering the poor Digo Muslims with their needs.

**Figure 23: A church in a Muslim neighbourhood**



#### **5.3.1.4 Jesus, God the incarnate won the confidence of the lost**

Explicitly, after Jesus mingled, sympathised, and ministered to the people's needs, He was able to win their confidence. The word confidence in Latin is composed of the two-root words *con*, meaning "with" and *fides*, meaning "faith." In the Bible, several words are employed to get across the meaning of the word *faith*. In Hebrew, the key root for "faith" is *amn*, from which the word amen comes. This shows the idea of constancy, continuity, and

consistency. It provides the notion of something firm and solid, and which can be trusted and believed. This is often translated as “believe” in the context of saving faith in God. Another form of *amn* means “truth.” In the context of Jesus’ example of winning people’s confidence, the implication would be that of evoking the kind of trust that comes from seeing firm and solid commitment, which in the incident of Jesus came through mingling with, sympathising with, and serving the people.

Similarly, in the Greek, the root word used to convey the Hebrew *amn* is “*pistis*.” This Greek word for faith means belief, trust, absolute certainty, reliability, and assurance. According to the researcher, in the context of Jesus’ example of winning people’s confidence, the implication would be that of arousing absolute trust, belief, certainty, and assurance in response to His unselfish commitment to mingling, sympathising, and serving the people. Nevertheless, it is crucial also to note that in the Bible, whenever this idea of confidence is ascribed to human beings, as in self-confidence or confidence in an individual, it can often have a negative meaning (Mic 7:5) and Ps. 118:9). The word is positive as it is attributed to God.

This calls for a word of caution as the church endeavours to do Mission among the people of other faiths. Christians as Christ’s followers are called to live out Jesus’ pattern of mingling, sympathising, and ministering to people’s needs. Thus, when those who are served see confidence in these followers of Jesus, then they are pointed to Jesus and what He has done for them in meeting their needs. As Christians do Mission and minister to the Digo Muslims, they should be careful as they represent Christ and they need to walk the fine line, as Jesus did, to win the trust and the confidence of the people. Nevertheless, people’s confidence and trust in Christ’s followers needs to be directed towards Jesus. The followers of Christ should be mere channels. The Muslims and others should see something of Christ in His followers be it selflessness, love, caring, self-denial for the good of others and they are

drawn to them. At the same time, as always, as these people observe Jesus' followers, because we are all sinners, they will not like all that they see in them. Hence, it is imperative to always point them to Jesus, in whom alone they can put their full confidence. With wisdom, the flaws of believers can actually become an opportunity to sympathise with them in an understanding way because we are all sinners in need of the Grace of Jesus. Moreover, we can point them to the One who has no flaws.

For Christians to win the Digo Muslims' full confidence, they should build bridges based on the common grounds. Trust must be built by respecting each other and what they both believe in their religions. Christians need to respect the Muslim Qur'an and their prophet Muhammad. There should be a mutual sincere friendship, which comes through bridging the gap between Christians and Muslims on social grounds just like Jesus' ministry. The Christian churches in the South Coast of Kenya should follow the footsteps of Jesus in their walk and talk. They must endeavour to seek for contact points in winning the Digos' full confidence and then point them to Jesus Christ. In TD Mashau's article entitled "*The belief in one God as a contact point in the Christian mission among the Muslims*" he provides one complete approach that proposes to bridge the gap between both Muslim and Christian faiths. He challenges Christians and Muslims to agree on the issue that the God of Islam is the same God of Christianity. Nevertheless, the truth is that the God of Islam (Allah one God) and the God of Christianity (Trinity) are markedly different and that conception is irrefutable. According to the researcher, Christians engaging Digo Muslims must look at them as worshipping an 'UNKNOWN' God like did Paul in Athens. As Paul walked the streets of this magnificent city with its incredible architecture and gleaming monuments, he was troubled. Everywhere he looked; there stood a statue, an altar, a temple, or a shrine to some God. The city was overrun with idols. Paul took this issue to God of heaven in prayer. He prayed carefully about what he would say to these Athenians when he appeared to them. Paul viewed

these people as completely ignorant, they really did not know any better, and so he stood before them and said to them, “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was walking along I saw your many Unknown God’. You have been worshipping him without knowing who he is, and now I wish to tell you about him” (Acts 17:22-23, NLT). Paul’s opening statement resulted in the Athenians listening to him, and it built the bridges for sharing the gospel. Paul did not focus on attacking their God or their religion but instead He focused on the beauty of Jesus and the Gospel. This statement avoided argumentation, which is advocated in the Scriptures:

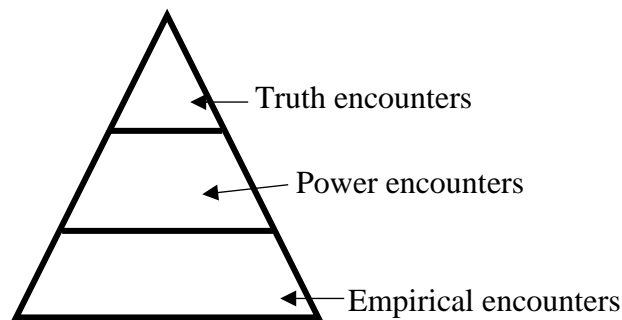
Do not have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. In addition, the Lord’s Servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

Certainly, it is vital that whenever Christian churches or missionaries use the belief in one God as a contact point in their engagement with Muslims, they curb or avoid the Trinitarian controversy at an early stage of their encounter (Mashau, 2003:14). This helps in opening up doors for more deliberations on conceptual issues, as the Holy Spirit remains at work to do the conviction. The true wisdom of the Lord is essential in such ministry. Likewise, Christians and missionaries should aim to witness through social and relational networks such as families, neighbours and community groups as natural bridges to the formation of fellowship when inviting Muslims to Christ. The church should also seek to communicate a culturally applicable message. The use of Scripture that addresses worldview issues and creates spiritual hunger to the Muslims should be aimed at. Story telling can do this well in communicating the gospel to Digo Muslims due to their African culture which naturally advocates listening to stories.

I suggest the following simple principles of storying (story telling) as also one of the bridge builders among the Digo Muslims in the process of winning their confidence in Christ

Jesus. There should be the understanding of the need for power encounters upon the listeners, and in this case the Digo Muslims. The pyramid below shows this process. At the top of the pyramid is the truth encounters, while the middle of the pyramid occupies the vital element of power encounters and while at the bottom is empirical encounters.

**Figure 24: Elements of Storying**



Truth encounters involves the mental and intellectual. This constitutes the truth that is expressed in creative ways in the story. Power encounters in storying bring change in an individual who is listening to the story. According to the researcher, without power encounters people go back to their old way of doing things like the Digo Muslims, as they may go back to their witchcraft, to their shrines, and healers, etc. In the process of power encounters, the listener listens to the story, and then as the stories are told with much prayer, this process continues to take place in a great way. Then the storyteller and the listener decide on the next steps.

According to the researcher, stories of power encounters are very significant in the sharing of the Gospel. Several examples of power encounter stories in the Bible are blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52; the storm in Mark 4; the great catch of fish in Luke 5; Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, act that touches people's heart; and the prodigal Son in Luke 15. Empirical encounters, which are at bottom of the pyramid, focus on community development, health, orphanages, wells, micro-credit, business, etc.

The how to do storying also is an important principle. This involves a long period of praying first (true persevering intercessory prayer). One must also know the story very well, and be able to tell it in a creative and flexible way. For example, you can ask your Muslim audience, “is it okay if I tell a story?” and then after storying you can ask them "what caught your attention in the story and what did you hear or see from it?" Then you can make observations based on their responses. Then, for clarity, retell the story and let them tell it if possible, asking them if they can help, you retell the story. Step into the story now at this time using your imagination led by the Holy Spirit who knows your audience perfectly. In the application ask the Muslim audience whether they saw something for themselves. Start from the beginning of the story, by using their words and talk with them about what they say. Ask permission to tell the story again, and be flexible, as you should not expect the story to go a certain way because at this point you are building bridges in winning their confidence. Moreover, if children are there let them stay for the story.

Actually, the goal is to let them give answers from their worldview in order to allow the Scriptures to penetrate their worldview. It is important to sequence the story, tell it once, then twice, then start your way through it and add another section appropriately. It is also crucial to always affirm their answers no matter how strange they are, for it is key to the understanding of their worldview and then responding in prayer and further discipleship. It will also be a preventative to syncretism of any nature, if you are listening because you will hear where it is happening and be able intervene with more Scripture. Hence, gradually this will enable you to construct truth while deconstructing false belief from their responses. The following are a sample of the kinds of questions to be asked and to be avoided in storying:

1. Always open-ended
2. There must be questions you don't know the answers to
3. Always based on their answers – you are listening to their answers

4. What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ was thinking in this story, was feeling, etc.?
5. What would cause them to think this way? . . . feel this way, respond this way? What other options do you think they had? How else could they have acted?
6. Bad types of questions to be avoided:
  - a. Leading questions (leading them to where you want them to go)
  - b. Limiting questions (How many loaves were in the boat? How many boats? etc.)
  - c. Why questions. Never use. Goes into areas that are not profitable
  - d. Open and shut questions

Indeed, confidence comes when trust is established and a contact point is made and storying greatly assists at this level.

#### ***5.3.1.5 Jesus, God incarnate invited people to follow Him (John 10:5)***

Jesus won the confidence of the people, after He mingled, and socialised with them as He sought to save them. He never waited for sinners to come to Him but He actively went to seek them out where they were. He spent time with the people, and He took the time to know them well and they knew Him well. He became a true shepherd to the lost that He came to save. Jesus affirms this in the gospel according to John saying:

“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:3-5).

In order for the Christians to invite the Digo Muslims to follow Jesus, they have to carefully follow Christ’s model of ministry. The church as a body of Christ should be proactive in seeking the lost in an effective manner. According to the researcher, Jesus’ approach of reaching the lost will always bear fruits. The churches in Digoland should stop focusing on

people who already share the same Christian worldview, such as Christians of other denominations. Each church denomination should prayerfully focus on the Digo Muslims and invite them to follow Jesus and not to follow them to their churches.

According to the nature of the Digo Muslims, inviting them to come to the Christian church would not work and it has not worked effectively as evidenced by the findings of this research. The most effective biblical model, which I believe is in line with Jesus approach and if applied by the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be fruitful with this kind of people, is the insider movement. This is one of the distinct types of movements to Christ among the unreached people groups evidenced in the last century (Lewis 2009:16). The insider movement has been defined as obedient faith in Christ that remains integrated with or inside their natural community (ibid).

This definition biblically fits the model in which the Digo Muslims community in the South Coast of Kenya should be invited to Jesus and remain following Him, and this is because of its two distinct features. First, the gospel takes root within already existing or pre-existing community or social networks, which becomes the main expression of “church” in that context. Secondly, believers are not gathered from diverse social networks to create a “church.” Fresh similar social structures are not introduced; and believers maintain their identity as members of their socio-religious community while living under the Lordship of Jesus and the authority of the Bible (ibid:16). In other words, the new spiritual identity of believing families in insider movements is in being followers of Jesus Christ and members of His worldwide kingdom, not necessarily in being affiliated with or accepted by the institutional forms of Christianity that are connected with traditionally Christian cultures. These believers maintain their temporal identity in their natural socio-religious community, while living transformed lives due to their faith in Jesus Christ.



The few Digo Muslims that have been converted to Christianity in the South Coast of Kenya, have been and are living in fear and threats from the family members and from the entire Muslim community for abandoning Islam. Some have been forced to leave their homes to go and live outside Digoland, and even that does not grant their safety. According to the researcher, the insider movement approach can effectively work in this Digo tribal culture that has strong family and community structures. Chapter three and four of this thesis clearly identifies the Digo people in this context. In such people, the process that tends to extract them from their faith, families and pre-existing networks of relationships, will provocatively harm their relationships. The extracted believers are rarely able to give the community support of any kind, thereby the continuity of spreading the gospel through its members' families, to those who perceive the Christian church has extracted or "stolen" their believers, relatives or friends from their Islam religion is hindered. However, when the gospel takes root within a pre-existing community, it becomes like yeast, and spreads within the community.

The new group formed becomes the God-given family of believers. The strong relational bonds already exist and what becomes new in this kind of setting is their commitment to Jesus Christ (Lewis 2009:17). Hence, these believers live within the pre-existing community networks, they progressively learn how to give spiritual fellowship for each other, and testimonies and praise ascend within their everyday communications (as in Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

The delight of the believers starts to infect the entire group and a great movement is developed within the community. According to the researcher, a Muslim or other people from other faiths do not need not to go through Denominational Christianity in order to enter God's family. This is something the Jewish Apostles initially thought and attempted to apply as they tried hard to convert the non-Jewish people to a Jewish Christianity requiring people to undergo physical Jewish circumcision, for them to become followers of Jesus. Later, they

realised that this was not a God-given requirement, but it was only man-made, and they had a paradigm shift (as Paul instructs in 1 corinthians 7:17-24). God had to speak to Peter through a vision, regarding this issue, and Peter became the first one to understand that they were no longer to call the Gentiles unclean. Hence, later on all of the Apostles came to a unity of accepting that it was not essential for Gentiles to convert to the Jewish religion. In other words, it was preferable that they not convert (not change their religion), but remain as they were when God called them. Similarly, Christ Himself had previously asserted to the Samaritan woman, and later to her whole town, that true faith is not restricted to Jewish religious forms, but consists in worshipping God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24).

In essence, at first the woman at the well in John 4 refused Jesus' invitation and offer of eternal life because, as a Samaritan, she followed an Abrahamic religion that the Jews hated as corrupt. As a result, she could not go to the temple or become a Jew. But Jesus distinguished true faith from religious membership, saying God was seeking "true worshipers who worship the Father in Spirit and truth" (v. 19-24). Realising that Jesus was "the Saviour of the world" (v. 42), not just of the Jews, many Samaritans in her town believed. Later in Acts we see that Samaritan believers remained in their own communities and maintained their Samaritan identity (Acts 8:14-17). However, at first the disciples did not understand that just as they could remain Jews and follow Jesus, the Samaritans could also remain Samaritan. The same problem we have now with many Christian denominations as they think that converting Muslims or people of other faiths to Christianity focus on them embracing the denomination in order for them to become effective in their service to God (Peace 2004).

The church in Digoland needs to follow Christ's model of inviting people to the kingdom of God in the New Testament.<sup>26</sup> Later in the book of Acts 15, the Holy Spirit

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<sup>26</sup> In the New Testament, the word *epistrophe* (conversion) means turning around, that is, reversing direction and going the opposite way. One turns from the way of sin to the way of Jesus. The other crucial New Testament term, *metanoia* (repentance), also carries the idea of turning, but it

revealed to the Apostles that even the Gentiles from the pagan backgrounds were not required to go through Judaism in order to enter God's family (Stendahl 1976). Like some of the Christian churches today, in the city of Antioch, the Jewish believers were persuading Gentile believers that they must become Jews to be fully acceptable to God's family. Nevertheless, Paul<sup>27</sup> never agreed to this kind of model, to the point that he brought this issue to the lead apostle in the Jerusalem council. This issue was fiercely debated because for centuries, the Jews had believed that conversion<sup>28</sup> to the Jewish religion was required to become part of the people of God. However, this was not the Holy Spirit's decision and after a long debate, the Holy Spirit showed the Jewish Apostles that they should not burden the Gentle followers of Jesus with their religious traditions and forms (Acts 15:19,28).

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concentrates on the inner, cognitive decision to make a break with the past. *Metanoia* must be combined with *pistis* (faith) in order to bring about *epistrophe* {as in Mark 1:15} (Peace 1999). Henceforth, that is why when Paul explains to King Agrippa what he preached to Jew and gentile, he says it is "that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance" (Acts 26:20).

<sup>27</sup> Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is defined by the commissioning statement in Acts 26:18, in this verse, there are three elements that define the process by which Gentiles can come to God. First, their eyes need to be opened "I am sending you to open their eyes." There was need for them to see their true state in relationship to God. Insight is foundational to change. Second, having seen, they must turn. They must turn from the way in which they are walking, which is the way of darkness, the way of Satan. They must turn to the way of light, which is the way of God. Third, having seen and turned, they will receive forgiveness and sanctification by faith in Christ Jesus (Peace 1999). In fact, when Paul was converted, there was a turning, which had two parts. Thus, turning from and a turning to, he turned from opposing Jesus to following Jesus. He turned from being a persecutor of Jesus to being a promoter of Jesus, and this involved a major reworking of theology (Fuller 1965). In other words, it was not that Paul rejected one theological system and embraced a completely new system, no, in fact, he continued to be an orthodox Jew, as Daniel P. Fuller (1965: 209) in his book, *Easter Faith and History*, puts out that even at the end of his ministry Paul continued to maintain his Jewish practices. Thus, on his final trip to Jerusalem, the church leaders "recommended that Paul submit to the Jewish vow for seven days in order to demonstrate his loyalty to Judaism. This Paul was willing to do in order to show that for a Jew to acknowledge that salvation was by grace did not mean that he must renounce his distinctively Jewish practices." However, Paul saw the old facts in a new context.

<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, when conversion is discoursed in the biblical literature, it is almost never in the context of "changing religions." In the Old Testament, for example, the word *shubh* ("turn" or "return") is used over one thousand times, and most of the reference are to the people of Israel "returning" to their God. As Witherup says in his summary of the idea of conversion in the Old Testament: "It may be surprising to some, but the OT message of conversion is addressed internally to the people of God and not externally to others. That is to say, conversion is not a missionary activity of getting 'converts' to a religion."

In like manner, the churches in Digoland, should invite people to follow Christ by all means, but not to demand that they become members of their denominational churches. It is imperative that we learn to follow Jesus' model.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis has discussed the various evangelism approaches in light of proposing an effective model for effective Mission among the Digo folk Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya. In order to arrive at a God proven model for sharing the gospel with these Muslim people, the biblical and theological basis of Mission to people of other faiths has been dealt with conclusively. The understanding of this biblical concept is an attempt to reposition the understanding of the church's involvement in evangelism to the Muslims. Both the Old Testament and New Testament clearly show instances when God's people the patriarchs, Israelites, and the disciples of Jesus met people of other faiths with the purpose of sharing God's word of love. This also shades the proper understanding of the church's obligation to evangelism within a biblical realm, rather than seeking man-made approaches. Similarly, it provides lessons for Christians' continuous encouragement in doing Mission to the people of other faiths in love. The Bible as a missionary book contains God's inspired stories, where God Himself is revealed as reaching out to humanity with the aim of reconciling a fallen and rebellious people to Him.

The historical Mission to the Digo Muslims has provided a proper understanding of the church's evangelism approaches in earlier centuries, as the missionaries attempted to evangelise the Muslims at large. Some of these methods caused more harm than good, for instance, the Portuguese missionaries found it difficult to make any permanent Christian impact within the coast because of strong hostility from the Muslims in Mombasa. Instead, the Christians were converted to Islam as the Portuguese's influence weakened and those Christians who refused to convert to Islam were killed. Actually, it was around the end of the

19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century when the missionary work among the Digo Muslims began in Kenya and Tanzania.

This mission work resulted in the conversion of few Digo Muslims families to Christianity. After the conclusion of the First World War which was the time of colonialism and nationalism between 1919-1946, when the missiologists began to question the polemic approach, which was the main approach, used to reach out to the Muslims. Although, missionaries were and are willing to try new approaches of ministry to Muslims, but still the older methods such as debate, dialogue, distributions of Christian literatures, and relief missions are being used today. Hence, these ministries have not been very effective in Mission to some Islamic communities in the world, including the south cost of Kenya, among the Digo folk Muslims.

The findings of the field research of the selected churches on current trends in the approaches to Mission among these Digo Muslims in this south cast of Kenya, has revealed that Mission work in this area has not been very effective. These findings have shown that some of main approaches are evangelistic crusades, debates and others as discussed in chapter four of this study. The participants said that the churches were facing various challenges that undesirably impacted on Mission to Digo Muslims. These include disunity and competition within the Christian denominations in Digoland, financial constraints, and lack of training of church members at large on how to reach Muslims. According to the researcher, some of the participants from the selected churches proposed that the churches need to enhance unity among themselves for effective evangelism in this area. It is clear that the ministries of evangelisation were ineffective and only a few Muslims have been converted to Christianity. From this time, the churches are in desperate need of a practical biblical model to do effective Mission to the Digo Muslims. Additionally, these findings have

established the current challenges and prompted the suggestion of a new and potentially effective model for Mission to Muslims.

In the process of proposing a model for effective approach to Mission among the Digo tribe Muslims, the application of the pastoral cycle of praxis has been discussed in this thesis. The theories of such a model have been dealt with and these include translation theory, hermeneutical theory, and incarnation theory. These theories led to a viable model for effective Mission. The biblical based model recommends a move that totally depends on the writing and dependability of the Word of God, the Bible as the source of wisdom for Jesus' mission. His approach is an effective model, and will bring true success in sharing the gospel with the Digo Muslims.

The Holy Scriptures show Jesus as one who mingled with the people and sought their good. He ministered with sympathy for the people He came to save, ministered to their many needs, won their confidence; and finally invited them to follow Him and made them His disciples. Jesus' incarnational model is the one I recommend as an approach of serving the Digo folk Muslims in their unique culture and this can involve Christians exercising their spiritual gifts to counter the principalities and the powers of darkness among folk Muslims (Arnold 2009). This model of Jesus' ministry is, in my assessment, in line with the insider movement. Jesus never uprooted anyone from his own culture in a destructive way but He invited sinners to "follow me." This study concludes by recommending that ministry to the Digo Muslims in the South Coast of Kenya will only be effective if the Mission is undertaken in light with Jesus' biblical model. The churches in this area should show true love to their Muslim neighbours with a focus on humbly serving them with practical ministries overflowing with true divine love. They must allow the Holy Spirit to work miracles through them and guide their strategies, and commit themselves to fervent and intense prayer for these people. The Holy Spirit is indeed the Spirit of Prayer and this is the only way to defeat

demonic strongholds and set captives free. This necessitates the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which is often in marked contrast to man-made strategies that will never be effective. This will take long and hard work but the fruitful and long-lasting results will bring great glory to God and joy to the world, as many Digo Muslims become followers of Jesus.

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## **Appendix 1: Introductory letter**

Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology

University of South Africa

PO Box 392

UNISA

0003

date

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

As supervisor of the doctoral research project of ....., I hereby affirm that he is a bona fide postgraduate student of the University of South Africa, who is doing a research project entitled:

.....

In his research, he ..... (short description of research project). I commend him to you, with the request that you assist him/her in pursuing this important research topic.

His contact details are: ..... (address) and s/he can be contacted at ..... (cell phone) or ..... (email).

If you have any questions about this research project, you are welcome to contact me at the departmental address above or by telephone at ..... or ..... My email address is .....@unisa.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

.....

DTh supervisor

## **Appendix 2: Interview schedule**

I am Pastor Joseph Nyagwoka, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the department of Missiology. I am conducting a research on Evangelism and folk Islam: A case study in South Coast of Kenya. By responding to the following questions, you will be assisting me get the first-hand information that will contribute to my success in this research.

### **Opening Introduction**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Church position: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

### **A. Questions for Muslim background believers (MBB) from the Digo tribe**

1. How did you come to live here in South Coast of Kenya? (Context analysis)
2. Who are you as Digo people of South Coast? (Context analysis)
3. What are were Your established faith practices before you became a Christian?  
(Context analysis)
4. How did you become a Christian and join this church? (Ecclesial analysis)
5. What mostly influenced in Your conversion to Christianity? (Theological reflection)
6. What are the major challenges do you face in this church since you became a Christian? (Context analysis)
7. What are you doing in addressing them? (Context analysis)
8. How is the church involved in helping you address those challenges? (Ecclesial analysis)
9. How do you assess the church's evangelism approaches to the Muslims in the area?  
(Theological reflection)
10. In Your view, what should the Church improve for a better evangelisation to the Digo tribe Muslims of South Coast of Kenya? (Strategies for Mission)

**A. Questions for Church leaders and frontline evangelists**

1. How long have you been serving among the Digo tribe of South Coast of Kenya as a pastor? (Context analysis)
2. In Your ministry among Digo tribe, what are the major Muslim evangelism issues that were brought to Your attention? (Context analysis)
3. How did you attempt to address these Muslim evangelism issues? (Context analysis)
4. What was Your biblical basis in responding to those Muslim evangelism issues?  
(Theological reflection)
5. In Your own experience as pastor among the Digo Muslims, do you think the Church is giving much attention to Muslim evangelism dominated areas? (Ecclesial analysis)
6. What are Your suggestions for the way forward for an effective Muslim evangelism in general and mainly to the Digo tribe folk Islam of South Coast of Kenya?  
(Strategies for Mission)

### **Kiambatisho 3: Mahojiano ratiba (Swahili)**

Mimi ni Mchungaji Joseph Nyagwoka, mwanafunzi katika chuo kikuu cha Afrika Kusini (UNISA) niko katika idara ya Umishonari. Kwa sasa ninafanya utafiti kuhusu Uhubiri na folk Islam. Utafiti huu unalenga maeneo ya Kusini mwa pwani ya Kenya.

Kujibu kwako maswali haya yafuatayo yatanisaidia kupata habari muhimu ambayo itafanikisha utafiti wangu.

#### **Maswali ya Utangulizi**

Jina: \_\_\_\_\_

Umri: \_\_\_\_\_

Mume/Mke: \_\_\_\_\_

Wadhifa Kanisani: \_\_\_\_\_

Kazi: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **A. Maswali ya Waislamu background waumini (MBB) kutoka kabila Digo**

11. Ilikuwaje ukawa mkaazi wa Kusini mwa Pwani ya Kenya? (Context analysis)
12. Wewe ni nani katika jamii ya Wa-Digo wa Kusini mwa Pwani? (Context analysis)
13. Ulikuwa na msimamo up iwa kiimani kabla na kujiunga na kuwa Mkristo? (Context analysis)
14. Ilikuwaje ukawa Mkristo na kujiunga na kanisa hili (la wasabato) (Ecclesial analysis)
15. Ninini kilichochochea uamuzi wako wa kujiunga na ukristo? (Theological reflection)
16. Ni changamoto zipi unazokumbana nazo katika kanisa hili tangu ulipojiunga na ukristo? (Context analysis)
17. Unafanyaje ili kukabiliana na hizo changamoto? (Context analysis)
18. Je kanisa linahusika vipi kusaidia kusuluhisha hizo changamoto? analysis

19. Mtazamo wako ni upi unapotazama mikakati ambayo kanisa lako inayo kushusu Ukiangalia mikakati ambayo kanisa inayo katika kuwafikia waisilamu na Injili katika eneo lako. (Theological reflection)
20. Kwa maoni yako, kanisa lapaswa kutilia mkazo katika maeneo yapi ili kuboresha uinjilisti kwa Wadigo wa kiisilamu kutoka Kusini mwa pwani ya Kenya? (Strategies for Mission)

**B. Maswali ya viongozi wa Kanisa na wainjilisti mstari wa mbele**

7. Kwa muda gani umehudumu katika maeneo ya kabila la Wadigo wa Kusini mwa pwani ya Kenya kama mchungaji? (Context analysis)
8. Katika huduma yako kwa kabila la Kidigo, ni maswala yapi ya kiunjilisti ambayo ulikumbana nayo? (Context analysis)
9. Uliyatatua vipi haya maswala ya Kiunjilisti kwa waisilamu wa Kidigo? (Context analysis)
10. Ulitumia maandiko yapi ya Kibiblia kujibu maswala hayo ya kiunjilisti kwa waisilamu? (Theological reflection)
11. Kwa kutumia ujuzi ulionao katika maeneo ya Wadigo, je unahisi kuwa kanisa linapatia uninjilisti kwa Wadigo wa kiisilamu kipaumbele inavyohitajika. (Ecclesial analysis)
12. Mapendekezo yako ni yapi kwa siku zijazo ili kuboresha Uinjilisti kwa waisilamu wa kawaida wa kidigo kutoka Kusini mwa pwani ya Kenya. (Strategies for Mission)

#### Appendix 4: Informed consent letter

I, the undersigned, hereby give consent that ....., a Doctor of Theology student at the University of South Africa, may use the information that I supplied to him in an interview for her/his doctoral thesis. I declare the following:

Statement	Agree	Do not agree
1. I have been informed by the researcher of the objectives of the intended research		
2. The researcher supplied to me his name, address and contact details as well as the details of his research supervisor		
3. I was informed why I was selected as an informant for the research project		
4. I give this consent willingly, under no coercion and without inducement		
5. I received satisfactory answers to any questions that I had about the research		
6. I was informed of the estimated time that the interview would take		
7. I retain the right to refrain from answering any questions posed by the researcher		
8. I agree that the interview may be recorded by means of an electronic device		
9. I agree that the researcher may quote my views in his thesis and in any subsequent publications that may flow from it		
10. I require that he should present to me (for my approval) the record that he made of the interview(s), before including it in his thesis		
11. I agree that he may refer to me by name when quoting my views in his thesis and possible subsequent publications		
12. I accept that he will store the record of my interview(s) safely and that he will destroy it no later than two years after his thesis has been accepted		
13. I understand this information and its implications		
14. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time in writing, without needing to give reasons		

Full names: .....

Place: ..... Date: .....

Signature: .....

## Appendix 5. Ethics Approval



DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY, CHURCH HISTORY AND MISSIOLOGY RESEARCH  
ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 03 September 2014

Ref #: [2014\_DERC\_008]

Joseph Borise Nyagwoka

Student #:35920378

Dear Joseph Borise Nyagwoka

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

**Title:** Evangelism and folk Islam: A case study in coast of Kenya

Name: Joseph Borise Nyagwoka

Address: P.O BOX 2213-0400, KISII, Kenya

Email: 35920378@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Contact number: +19194540546

**Supervisor:** Prof Derrick Mashau

Contact number: 012 429 4227

Email: mashatd@unisa.ac.za

**Qualification:** DTh- Missiology (98413)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted *for the duration of the project*.

**Approval:** The application was approved in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research



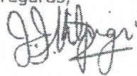
University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
www.unisa.ac.za

Ethics by the Departmental Ethics Review Committee on the 03 September 2014

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethical quality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Departmental Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for you as researcher or the research participants.
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

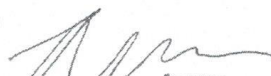
Kind regards,



Signature

Prof JNJ Kritzinger

Chairperson, DERC

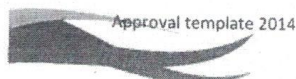


Signature

Prof Jessica Murray

On behalf of the Executive Dean,

College of Human Sciences



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